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**FREDERICK THE GREAT**

**THE MEMOIRS OF HIS READER**

**HENRI DE CATT**

**(1758-1760)**



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# FREDERICK THE GREAT

THE MEMOIRS OF HIS READER

HENRI DE CATT

(1758-1760)

TRANSLATED BY F. S. FLINT

With an Introduction by

LORD ROSEBERY

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## PART TWO—*Continued*

WE had news that the Russians had struck their camp at Cammin, and that they were retiring in the direction of the forest of Massin, pursuing their march by way of Vietz and Massin to Landsberg. The King pursued them as far as the forest, without being able to attack the rear-guard. After our troops had passed Blumberg, it was discovered that a corps of Russians was posted behind the ponds and marshes which are in the forest, and had furnished the bridges and avenues with a large quantity of artillery, with which they fired on our hussars, but immediately our infantry had arrived, and had fired a few rounds from their guns, this Russian corps abandoned its position and continued its march. The King set up his quarters and his camp at Blumberg. I was called in the evening at five o'clock, my audience being very short.

1st September, at Blumberg.

“I was able to take nothing to-day from my barbarians except a good number of their sick and a large amount of their pitiful baggage. Were you not edified by the manner in which they had ruined this poor village? This riff-raff, not being able to carry away the beds of my unfortunate peasants, unmade them, and scattered the feathers in the road and in the rooms, and these feathers

served as litter for their horses. You will agree that these are horrors, but, my dear sir, if there were not still more frightful horrors, we might pass over those which they committed here. If Voltaire saw all this,<sup>1</sup> how he would cry out: Ah, barbarians! ah, brigands, inhuman as you are, how can you hope to inherit the Kingdom of Heaven! I am sending from here General Manteuffel with ten battalions and two regiments of hussars to pursue the Russians. Count Dohna will command the rest of the troops. As for myself, the wandering knight as ever, I am leaving these regions to-morrow, to run to my other enemies. The Austrians have advanced for some distance into Lusatia; I shall repair there as quickly as possible. I shall arrange to be joined on the way by my Margrave Charles, and I shall then see what it will be possible for me to do. Good evening. I march to-morrow afternoon. I doubt whether I shall be able to see you on this day. If this be so, *bon voyage!*”

General de Seydlitz had begged me to take coffee at Sir Andrew Mitchell's. A large part of the general staff were there to see the General, and to compliment him on the glory which he had once again achieved in the battle.

‘You have saved the State, General. It was you who won the battle.’

<sup>1</sup> This seemed to me rather good, for I remember that it was the King himself who said this to M. de Voltaire, on whom he fathers it. See one of the letters of the King to Voltaire in his miscellanies of poetry and literature.

‘I, gentlemen, you are jesting. It was the King alone who won it. I only did what every good Prussian should do, I fought well, and a thousand fought quite as well as I. So, gentlemen, a truce to compliments, I beg of you. Let us imprint well on our minds and our hearts all that we owe to the King and to the country. The more critical the situation of our dear master becomes by the number of his enemies, the more should we all, without exception, redouble our efforts to serve him well, and every one who wishes to be thought a good Prussian should account his life as nothing, and on every occasion should offer it as a sacrifice to His Majesty ; otherwise he is a Jew. Long live the King !’

Such was the speech of this great general, who, according to the admission of the King himself, had won the battle.

In the afternoon, His Majesty set out from Blumberg and marched to Manschnow with Wedell, Billerbeck, and Rohr’s battalions, Below, Forcade, the Prince of Prussia, Asseburg and Kalkstein’s regiments, the bodyguard, the *gens d’armes*, the carabineers, the cuirassier regiments of Seydlitz, the Prince of Prussia and Prince Frederick cuirassiers and Czettritz and Normann’s dragoons. The 2nd  
September.

On the 3rd, he pushed on to Müllrose. 3rd Septem-  
ber.

On the 4th, to Trebatsch, where the King sent the Margrave orders to join him at Sonnenwalde. 4th Septem-  
ber.

On the 5th, to Lübben, where Wied’s battalion remained to cover the bridges over the Spree. 5th Septem-  
ber.

7th September.

On the 7th, to Dobrilugk.

8th September.

On the 8th, to Elsterwerda. The King, who had wished the Margrave's army to join him at this spot, gave orders, while I was there, to turn in the direction of Grossenhayn.

9th September.

On the 9th, His Majesty, passing in the afternoon through Grossenhayn with 11 battalions, 53 squadrons and Du Verger's free companies, arrived in the evening at Grossdöbritz.

10th September.

On the 10th, to Hof-Lössnitz.

During these eight days of forced marches, I saw the King only five times and for a few moments. Princess Amelia came to see him at Müllrose.

“This would have been for me,” he said to me, “the first pleasure I had enjoyed for a very long time, if my good sister<sup>1</sup> had not reopened the wound in my heart with the details she gave me of the death of my dear brother, who will ever be the subject of all my regrets. He was really killed because Mutzel's advice was not followed; he was in favour of continued bleedings. The other periwigged heads were of opinion that my brother was too weak, and would succumb under another bleeding. Why should our life, and a life as dear as was that of my brother, be the victim of the ignorance, the obstinacy and the arrogance of doctors? These Esculapian executioners of men were not alone guilty; there were others who were much more criminal, and these were the rogues who

<sup>1</sup> It seemed to me that the Princess had touched on very many things in her conversation, and had talked of very many people.

never ceased to embitter the mind of my dear brother, by depicting me in his eyes in the most odious colours. If there is a justice in this world, it will avenge me ; it will avenge my brother for all the diabolical machinations of these infernal creatures. Why did he listen to them ? If it were not for them, he would perhaps be still alive. Goodness in a prince is without doubt a great virtue, but if it is not combined with a great firmness of soul, if it abandons us whenever any fellow comes to us with a fine speech, if it betrays us without investigation into dangerous connections, if it causes us to see, feel and hear everything that those about us desire that we should see or hear—my friend, my friend, that goodness becomes worse than tyranny, or, as this word may seem odious to you, worse than the greatest hardness of heart. My worthy brother was too kind and too easy. He did not give enough consideration to the fact that those who surround princes are for the greater part dominated by interest or by ambition, often by the vilest intentions. My brother, who, with his fine qualities of heart, was incapable of deceiving anybody, could not imagine that any one should wish to deceive him.

“ Like him, during the time of my youth, I allowed myself to be seduced into easily made acquaintances. Like him, I thought that those whom I chose for my companions could not deceive me, that all they said tended to my greater advantage. I confess that I was flattered by this

idea, which formed part of the happiness of my existence ; but, my dear sir, I was nevertheless observant, and, as soon as I remarked that the notion which flattered me so much was far from representing the truth, I became still more carefully observant ; I changed my method ; I felt that I should give my trust only on sure grounds, that it was important for me to convince those who surrounded me, or who might afterwards surround me, that there was nothing to gain with me by tale-bearing and intrigues ; that I was a man who intended to see for himself, and that I should be immovable in the plans I should make.

“ Have I gained much, my dear sir, in learning to appreciate men thus, in demonstrating that I had a mind of my own, that you could not do as you liked with it ? No, no, I have gained nothing for my own advantage by becoming aware of the falseness of human virtues ; but I think I have gained a great deal for the good of the State. Firmness is what is required, and worthy and upright people around a prince ; otherwise everything will go to rack and ruin. I am quite certain that my brother, had he been on the throne, would have studied men, that he would not have allowed himself to be led, but that he would have had that firmness which I have, and which I shall have, sir, until the last breath of my life.”

His Majesty, during the march, read in the morning the *Academics* of Cicero, after having attended to his military affairs. In the evening,

he spoke to me of what he had read in the morning, observing to me that this giving an account of what he read was the best method of making it his own. After the exposition he had made, he read me the continuation of the book, and in this way, besides the *Academics*, he read during the journey Cicero's treatise *On the Chief Good*. One evening he began the tragedy of *Andromache*; but, after having read the first four lines, he shut the book, saying :

“Am I not an old fool to read a tragedy, when I shall probably soon have to play one of another kind? Ah, my dear sir, if I only had the hundred arms of Briareus, what great things I should do!”

On the evening of our arrival at Lübben and while he was reading, a letter was brought to him.

“Catt,” he said to me, “here is a letter from my dear marquis. He congratulates me on the winning of my battle. He is still in Hamburg, which he will doubtless not leave yet awhile; I know my d'Argens of old. Do you know, my dear sir, what he is doing in that trading town?”

‘No, Sire.’

“He is eating oysters and crabs, emptying the chemists of pills, using all the enemas of the apothecaries, and I wager that at this very moment he is shut up hermetically in his room.

“In spite of all these little weaknesses, which, according to him, are only my fabrications, and which I often banter him about, I have a particular

fondness for the Marquis ; he is one of those persons who can become attached to you in an instant ; he has therefore merited all my confidence. I will reply to him to-morrow, and I will send him my Lucretian form of prayer. He has a Babette who makes him happy ; so I will not wish him, as I wished you, a fond wife who will be the happiness of his life. My prayer finished, I will recommend my dear Marquis to his bed, to his apothecary and to the protection of chance which regulates and decides so arbitrarily the affairs of this sub-lunary empire which we have the honour to inhabit. If my head is all right to-morrow, I will tell him all this nonsense.”

At Elsterwerda, where, as I said, we arrived on the 8th, the King walked in the garden of the manor house, and commanded that, when I arrived, I should be told to go there. I found the King occupied in tracing lines with his stick.

“ You see me, my dear sir, drawing with a very fine brush, some of the paths of my Sans-Souci. While walking in this garden, I have been imagining that I was on the paths of the Chinese palace, that from there I went to my colonnade, that I turned on my steps and went in the direction of the orangery and my gallery. Ah, my dear sir, now and then my illusion was dissipated, and I found myself in a garden which is not mine, my Sans-Souci is not within my reach ; perhaps, alas ! it will not be any more for me.”

And, looking at him, I saw that his eyes were



wet. This language touched me. I tried to divert him from his sad ideas, which seemed to occupy him to the exclusion of all else, by turning the conversation to a letter from the Marquis d'Argens which I had received in the morning.

“Never mind the letter, my dear sir. You are trying, I see, to tear me away from my ideas which you think are gloomy. They are not so; leave them to me just as they are; I find pleasure in recalling the image of a thing which is no longer for me.”

Then, walking round, keeping his eyes fixed on the grass all the time, he was a good quarter of an hour without saying a word; then, breaking the silence:

“Let us go into the walks,” he said, “which are better kept than the others, and from there we will go to our friend Cicero, the end of whose fine treatise I will read to you. That will at least be better than ruminating too much on the quiet life which I should like to and cannot lead.”

When leaving this spot, he heard a captain of Du Verger's free battalion command his soldiers to shoulder arms, and a soldier reply:

‘In a minute, captain.’

I thought that this way of replying, so unprecedented and so contrary to all discipline, especially the Prussian discipline, would arouse the indignation of the King; but I was deceived. He smiled and simply said to an officer who was at his side:

“It must be acknowledged that I am compelled

to employ riff-raff of the worst kind. What could you do with people like this, who are only fit, I think, for the work of Cossacks? But if these b—— take it into their heads to start pillaging here, let them be struck down without pity.”

I did not see the King on the 10th, the day of his arrival; and on the following day I was only called for an instant.

The 11th  
September,  
at Hof-Löss-  
nitz.

“Here is some more work which will become serious. We shall march to-morrow in order to reach the heights of Loschwitz and Dürre-Bühlau, and to observe the great Marshal more closely; with this position, I shall cover Dresden and all Saxony on this side of the Elbe. If we manage this affair well, I think there will be no necessity to preach vanity to my army and my people. What a number of singular things, unprecedented even, have happened in this war, what battles won, what a number of nations beaten—in truth, I say it without vanity, all this is greater than the works of Hercules. If I were younger, or a little less of an old dotard, what a number of hard blows I might yet give my enemies, and especially the house of France which pesters me so much; but don’t let us brag so much, sir; let us see what we can still carry out. If you reply to the honest Marquis, give him my kind regards. Tell him that I think that Maupertuis was right when he held that the sum of the evils is greater than that of the blessings, that, however, it all leaves me indifferent, since I

have almost nothing left to lose, and that the few moments which still remain to me to live do not trouble me enough to make me cram myself, as he does, with senna, cassia and rhubarb pills. Tell him, finally, that if he thinks that so many remedies can prolong his existence, let him stuff himself with them, because his existence interests me. Good evening. We shall see each other the day after to-morrow."

The King marched in the afternoon with the advance-guard, and encamped before the town of Dresden, the right wing on the Elbe and the left in the direction of the main road to Radeberg. He could not push on any farther, because night came on, as we arrived in the outskirts, and a strong detachment of Croats occupied, near Weissen-Hirsch, the abattis which General de Schmettau had had constructed when Marshal Daun had approached Dresden.

This 12th September, 1758, in the outskirts of Dresden.

The advance-guard marched in two columns towards Schullwitz, destroyed the abattis, and drove off the Croats stationed at Weissen-Hirsch.

13th September, at Schönfeld.

Marshal Keith followed with the army, also in two columns; the right wing rested on the Trieben-berg, the summit of which was occupied by infantry; the centre touched Schullwitz, and the left wing was supported by the Käferberg, before which huge abattis were constructed. The infantry formed the first and second lines, the cavalry the third and fourth. Werner's hussars covered the left flank, and Zieten's camped in reserve.

This was the explanation of the position he had taken up given to me by His Majesty in the evening at Schönfeld, where the headquarters were. He added that he had had two bridges thrown across the Elbe at Pillnitz for the communications with the army of Prince Henry, his brother, and that a battalion and a detachment of several hundred men of the garrison of Dresden would defend these bridges.

“It will not be my fault, as you see, if you do not understand thoroughly the little that we are doing. I lose very few opportunities of putting you in the position to speak as well as anybody else of what relates to our high deeds. What did you think of the sublime discharges of artillery and musketry with which your ears must have been pretty well deafened yesterday? My lord, the great Marshal, ordered them for the battle of Zorndorf, which he pretends that Fermor won; but, my dear sir, would you like to know the aim of all this bluster? It was this: as the Marshal, for the safety of his soul, must cram himself with masses, just as the good marquis stuffs himself with pills for the preservation of his stomach, he zealously seized on this opportunity to satisfy his dominating taste. Perhaps also M. Fermor is playing at this comedy to avoid the trouble which the humble confession of his defeat would have brought upon him; but you must acknowledge that it is all supremely ridiculous.”

During the thirteen days which the King re-

mained at Schönfeld, he employed the whole of the leisure left him by his military affairs in composing short pieces against his enemies.

“As long as I breathe, my dear sir, I shall poke fun at these people who are so implacable against me. If I cannot beat them, at least I will sting them and exasperate them as much as I can. These featherless bipeds are packed with folly and ludicrousness beyond all imagining. It is not difficult, my friend, to point out this ridiculousness. I make it my business ; without saying anything offensive to them, I will overwhelm them with praise which they do not deserve, and if they employ all means to do me as much harm as they can, I will, in turn, employ, besides my army, my pen and ink to hurl bolts at them which will annoy them and drive them to despair. Thus, like Hercules, I will lay low this Hydra of enemies who are continually springing up on all sides against me and my country.”

In this spirit, His Majesty composed the *Letter of a Swiss to a noble Venetian*, that of a *Secretary of Count Kaunitz to a Secretary of Count de Cobenzl*, and sketched out the *Letters of Phihiku* and the rough draft of the *Letter of Madame de Pompadour to the Queen of Hungary* to demand the abolition of the college of chastity. All these little pieces have been printed. The King had only three or four copies printed, of which he had the kindness to give me one. They will appear in a volume with others which the King will write, for it seems to me that his humour will not stop at these.

Every evening he read to me what he had written.

“Well, my dear sir, are not the Well-Beloved, the Apostolic Hag and the Greek W—— well treated? Do you think that they will laugh uproariously?”

‘No, not at all, Sire, but they will laugh still less if Your Majesty could—which would be much better—beat their armies all to nothing.’

“You do not beat for the wishing, sir, remember that, but he who will can write, if he has a little genius.”

‘Yes, Sire, but this man of genius should have, in order to give scope to his imagination, at least 200,000 men at his orders.’

“You are right, my friend; so you think this is strong and well aimed.”

‘Too strong,’ I said.

“Too strong, the devil you do. I see that the misfortunes and troubles of others are but a dream.”

‘Your troubles, Sire, are certainly not a dream for me; but I should like Your Majesty to free yourself from them with cannon rather than with pens, which do not lead to decisions like the former, and which may perhaps drive away those peace-making pens which would do still more than cannon.’

“Ah! my dear politician, what you say there is all very fine; but you must not think it ill because, while awaiting these peace-making pens, I use an anti-peace-making one.”

When Prince Henry came to Headquarters, His Majesty told me, in the evening, that I should pay my court to him, that I should see a very amiable prince, full of parts and bravery, and as generous as a king. It was thus he described his brother to me, adding :

“What I am telling you about him is without any prejudice. He is as I describe him to you.”

I had the honour of paying him my respects. I perceived immediately that, as regards that great civility of manners which conciliates men and encourages them, he possessed it in a supreme degree. As for his other qualities of which His Majesty had spoken to me, I deferred to his judgment, since it was not for me to appreciate such brilliant qualities in the moment in which I had the good fortune to see him.

That is what happened, as near as may be, which was foreign to the military operations, during the stay of the King at Schönfeld. What he told me relative to his operations at the time that they were being carried out was that, having learned that the Swedes were advancing in the Mark, he had been obliged to detach General de Wedell with several battalions and a few squadrons, who were to be reinforced on the way.

“Thus, my dear sir, I must turn in all directions, and part with men when I have the greatest need of them. All this is very distressing. I do all that it is possible to do, and my efforts end in a minimum.

(16th Sep-  
tember.)

I tried with superior forces—it was on the 16th, and he told me in the evening—to break through General Loudon. My aim was to make the enemy army come out of his position, which should have supported him, and to bring on a general battle. All my army was to be ready to march at the word, but as men propose and the gods dispose, they disposed General Loudon, although reinforced during the night by five regiments, to retire in time, and they planted him on the Capellenberg near Dürren-Fochs, and the sole fruit of my fine plan was six officers and 360 mangy men whom we captured. You see that fortune is not on the side of old dotards like me. It threatens me also in the rear by the siege of Neisse, which is being prepared. I shall have to run over there again, and to be always on the run, my dear sir, is my lot : this is the cup which I must drink. We march to-morrow. The movement I am making, which pleases me, will astonish the great Marshal and the dandies of the Empire. Come here, and let me explain it to you. The great Fabius, who clings to his unattackable camp of Stolpen, draws his provisions over the Elbe from Zittau, from Silesia even by way of Bautzen, and has not the slightest desire to fight. This does not suit my plans ; I shall therefore endeavour to restrict his communications with this last place, and cut down his supplies. I am having the bridges over the Elbe at Pillnitz taken away. Retzow, from his camp at Arnsdorf, will march with his two columns towards Haus-



walde, and Werner will occupy, before the arrival of the said gentleman, the heights which are beyond Hauswalde. Your obedient servant will follow General Retzow, and Marshal Keith will form the rear-guard with all the right wing, which will remain under arms until all the *impedimentum belli* have set out. We must always spout a few words of our Latin. Is *impedimentum* correct ? ”

‘ If Your Majesty said *a*, it would be better.’

“ Well, let us say *impedimenta* then, and encamp on the heights of Hauswalde and Rammenau, while Marshal Keith will take the Arnsdorf camp which General Retzow has left.

“ That is my plan. If I can force my Fabius to fight in a spot which he does not expect, I shall say with my friend Horace, *my head will be raised to the skies*.

“ To-morrow then at Hauswalde. With a little luck, we may have glimpses of the possibility of embracing our household gods.”

I was not called, His Majesty being occupied the whole day in sending off letters and orders, in spite of a very violent pain, according to what his surgeon told me, caused by a tooth which had broken. 25th September, at Hauswalde.

We marched on this day to Rammenau. As Marshal Keith had struck his camp at Arnsdorf and joined His Majesty, the whole army changed its position, and encamped in four lines, the third and fourth of which were composed of the cavalry. Le Noble and Du Verger’s free companies occupied 26th September, at Rammenau.

the wood on the right wing; other companies that on the left wing of the army. The whole of the right wing was masked by a fairly thick wood, in which several battalions encamped. Zieten's hussars covered the right flank, the other hussars the left flank. It was thus that the King explained to me the position at Rammenau.

He stayed eleven days in this spot, from the 26th on which we arrived, until the 7th October, on which day we left. Much preoccupied with his military operations, often given up to his anxieties, he was diverted very agreeably by a letter which he received from Voltaire. One evening when I was called very early, he came out to meet me in the vestibule, holding a paper in his hand.

“My friend, I have just received a letter from Voltaire from *Délices*. He says some very fine things to me. Although my head is not in a very fit state, in all this hurly-burly, to reply to him in kind, I will do my best. I must correct my *Ode to the French*, which will make him laugh, I'll warrant.”

He read me this letter which gave him so much pleasure. M. de Voltaire in fact had written some very flattering things, and expressed the liveliest interest in the successes of the great man.

“You see, my dear sir, Voltaire does not forget me. Our correspondence will now start again and will be well established. You must agree that this man writes divinely well. If his heart equalled his talents, what a man, my friend, what

a man, and how small we should all feel before him ! ”

It was this heart which made me doubt the wisdom of sending an ode so strongly worded against the French and their King. His Majesty had told me such frightful things about this depraved heart, that I could not wholly share the joy he felt at this letter. The use which Voltaire might make of the ode to the King's hurt decided me to seize on a favourable moment to make my humble prayer to him that he should not send such a piece, especially at that moment. The opportunity arose, and I took it. His Majesty having, against his custom, sent for me in the morning : “ Here,” he said, “ is my ode revised, corrected and polished so that it shall lack in nothing. You will understand that Voltaire must admit that the Don Quixote of the North ” (this was his expression) “ has not neglected his poetry, and that the god of verses still inspires him sometimes, in spite of the distance that separates Don Quixote from his old master. Now, listen.”

He read. “ Well, can it pass ? ”

‘ But this strophe, and Voltaire's heart which you fear, which you have so often told me is a heart of unprecedented depravity, can all this pass ? ’

“ And why should it not pass ? Be certain that Voltaire will laugh at this tirade.”

‘ With that laughter which meditates, as you told me, some malevolence or a vengeance.’

“ But come, what do you think is so strong?  
Speak quite frankly.”

I then read to him :

Je vois leur vil assemblage,  
Aussi vaillant au pillage,  
Que lâche dans les combats.<sup>1</sup>

“ Well, did these gentlemen show themselves  
so very courageous in the Rossbach affair ? ”

‘ Troops sometimes become frightened. The  
bravest have been known to abandon themselves,  
without reason, to panic terror, Sire. That might  
yet pass, but this :

Quoi ! Votre faible monarque,  
Jouet de la Pompadour,  
Flétri par plus d’une marque  
Des opprobres de l’amour,  
Lui qui, détestant les peines,  
Au hasard remet les rênes  
De son empire aux abois,  
Cet esclave parle en maître,  
Ce Céladon sous un hêtre  
Croit dicter le sort des rois.<sup>2</sup>

‘ Ah, Sire, since you permit me to speak frankly,  
that tirade will not pass, without its being mis-  
used, I fear.’

“ You think then that there are some truths  
which may not be communicated to Voltaire ? ”

<sup>1</sup> The French are meant. [‘ I see their vile concourse, as valiant in pillage as they are cowardly in battle.’]

<sup>2</sup> [‘ What ! Your feeble monarch, the toy of La Pompadour, branded with more than one mark of the infamies of love, he who, detesting all cares, places the reins of his tottering empire in the hands of chance, this slave speaks as a master, this Celadon under a beech-tree thinks he dictates the fate of kings.’]

‘Your Majesty is a better judge of that than I am.’

“Well then, we will not send it then. The b—— might, as you say, abuse my confidence. I will just send him a letter—you can take a copy of it—so that, if you and he survive me, you will be a witness of what I wrote, and will tell those who wish to hear all about it.”

My joy was great, I confess, at the King’s making a sacrifice to my entreaty of a poem <sup>1</sup> which would have been a cause of sorrow to him.

“This day has not been badly filled, my dear sir: this afternoon a letter to Voltaire, and this morning a long ride and a great deal of fatigue.

“As Loudon persisted in remaining on the heights of Giessmansdorf, it was important that I should dislodge him and take away from the enemy all communication with Bautzen. To do this, we yesterday reconnoitred the roads by which we should have to pass in order to march on my lord Loudon. I sent the Prince of Würtemberg forward with a regiment of hussars, three regiments of dragoons, one regiment and three battalions of infantry. He marched by way of Burka in order to take the enemy on the right flank: follow me closely. Prince Maurice, with a regiment of hussars, one of infantry and five battalions, marched to the right of Giessmansdorf in order to turn this village

<sup>1</sup> He sent it, however, unknown to me, as I shall tell in what follows, and he had great reason to be sorry for it. It was in the beginning of May that he did this fine thing.

and reach the hill occupied by the enemy. And I, with Zieten's hussars, two regiments of infantry and four battalions, marched straight to Giessmansdorf. But my Loudon, having doubtless been informed of our marches, retired at four o'clock in the morning, and for all my labour and my carefully planned arrangements, I only had seven wretched dragoons of a camp guard whom we made prisoners. All this would have put me into a bad humour, if I did not unfortunately know by a long and sad experience that you never do all that you wish. M. de Loudon took up his position on the mountains behind Bischofswerda, which we occupied after the enemy had abandoned this town."

During the few days on which we still remained at Rammenau the King was busy correcting the short pieces he had written at Schönfeld, and his *Ode to the Germans*. He read me nearly the whole of his book of poems, of which he had had printed only a few copies.

"I composed these poems to occupy and distract my mind. They are only intended for myself and for a few friends to whom I may read them. I was so unwise as to give a copy to Voltaire. It is true that he sent it back to me on my order transmitted to him by Freytag; but God knows whether the animal may not have had a copy of it made; he is the sort of man who would play a trick of that kind."

On this occasion, I told him that all the gazettes

had published the story of the violent and unworthy manner in which M. Freytag had behaved towards M. de Voltaire.

“I know,” said His Majesty, “and I know that Voltaire complained loudly and breathed fire against me in all the little courts which he passed through; but I assure you that this blockhead of a Freytag exceeded my orders. I asked him simply to get back for me my book of poems, and the bumpkin demanded it with a harshness of which I disapproved. I know the regard which is due to distinguished men of letters; how should I have been wanting in this regard with one who surpasses them all! Voltaire lied in his throat when he said that I was responsible for the bad treatment he suffered at Frankfort. He has been tremendously sulky towards me for it, and, in spite of all his cajoleries, I do not trust him very greatly yet.”

This alternation of trust and mistrust which often made its appearance when Voltaire and several other people were concerned always struck me particularly. Left to the calm of reason, the King was distrustful of the tricks of which M. de Voltaire was capable, but allowing himself to be carried away by an imagination excited and flattered by the dazzling images and the delicate praise presented to him, he gave himself up without reserve to the *Patriarch of Literature*.<sup>1</sup>

On this day, the King marched in two columns 7th October  
1758, at to Bautzen, and there crossed the Spree, on which Bautzen.

<sup>1</sup> Voltaire, the King's own expression.

he rested with the right of his army, the left touching the village of Burka. The Prince of Würtemberg, encamped before Bautzen, marched on our arrival by way of Purschwitz to Weissenberg, where he joined General Retzow, who encamped the whole of this corps between the latter town and Krischa.

M. de Daun marched during this day in the direction of Kittlitz, and encamped, his right wing resting on the Löbau and the left on the high mountain which is opposite Hochkirchen. M. de Loudon occupied the mountain called Lehnerberg, and, when the rear-guard had joined him, he pitched his camp between Postewitz and Schirgiswalde. M. d'Esterhaszy with his light troops took possession of the Stromberg before the right of the army, and Prince de Durlach, starting from Unwürde, crossed the Löbau and marched to Rosenhayn.

“That is what my enemies and I did yesterday,” said the King to me on the day after our arrival at Bautzen. “I was so tired when I arrived here, and suffered so cruelly from toothache, that I did not care to send for you in order to bore you with my sufferings. Be prepared, my dear sir. Everything promises a good ending to the campaign, either as a result of the manoeuvres which I shall carry out, or else of a battle which will take place, and which will be no light affair. If I still had a little of my old luck, ah, how useful it would be at the present time; but my luck has left me, and,



after all, how can any one guess what will be the issue of this campaign in the general mix-up and fermentation of affairs ! One favourable happening may change my painful situation for the best, but a reverse may also overwhelm me. I must, however, be prepared for all happenings ; I must fortify myself with my stoicism, abandon myself to the torrent of vicissitudes which is carrying me along, and to-morrow march to see whether this torrent will take us to port.”

This glimpse of confidence at certain moments, this anxiety at others over the chances of this accursed game of chance (as he called it), since he was playing for so high a stake, agitated the King's mind in turn, he being more disposed at this moment, and more than I had yet observed in him, to take the gloomiest views of the risks he had to run.

This situation in which I often saw him troubled me, and when the King perceived that I was much affected by it :

“ Never let us despair,” he said to me, “ all may yet come right, and I will acquaint you when I have good reasons to believe that everything will go according to our wishes.”

The King marched to Hochkirchen in four columns during a very thick fog. When this fog had cleared off, we saw that the enemy army was encamped opposite this village, the right wing touching Nostitz and stretching as far as the river Löbau, the centre occupying the Spittelberg, a

10th October, at Rodewitz, near Hochkirchen.

mountain commanding all those in the neighbourhood ; the left wing resting on the hill at Plotzen and penetrating into the woods.

On their arrival at the hill at Hochkirchen, our hussars of the advance-guard attacked an enemy's post, and captured an officer and thirty-eight cuirassiers. The King pitched his camp, the right wing of the infantry extended beyond the village of Hochkirchen, which was occupied by six battalions. Czettritz's dragoons covered the right flank ; the free companies occupied a small wood of heather which was before this flank ; Zieten's hussars encamped close by ; cavalry guards were stationed beyond these advanced posts to observe the plain of Steindörfel and Meschwitz.

The front of our camp, from the village of Hochkirchen to the left wing, was covered by a deep ravine, in which flows a brook whose sides are rather steep. Two battalions occupied the villages of Kuppritz and Niethen, which are in this ravine, and before which cavalry guards were placed.

The left wing of the army encamped on the hill which is between Niethen and Lauske, and the chasseurs took up position here. The precipices which are between Rodewitz and Tschorna covered the flank of this wing ; four regiments of cavalry were placed in the first line, and the others encamped in the second. General Puttkammer took up his position on the left of the army near Lauske, with five squadrons from Retzow's corps which he had brought up. A battery of thirty pieces of

cannon was set up before the left wing, and one of twenty on the right. The rest of the artillery was distributed along the first line. M. de Retzow's corps was encamped, as I have said, between Weissenberg and Krischa.

Marshal Keith followed on the 11th, and joined His Majesty with the Lattorff and Forcade regiments, Krockow's dragoons, five squadrons of Zieten's corps, and the army's baggage train.<sup>1</sup>

The Prince of Hesse remained at Bautzen with three regiments and five squadrons of hussars, to cover the bakery established in that town.

As the right of the enemy army resting on the Löbau was not altogether out of danger of attack, since the ground on the opposite bank was higher than that on which it was encamped, Marshal Daun sent four battalions of grenadiers to Glossen, which is on the other side of the river, and put this village into a good state of defence. General Loudon, who had encamped at Klein-Postewitz, drew nearer to the army; he stationed his infantry on the hill at Wuischke and his cavalry behind Rachlau; his light troops occupied the villages of Klein-Tschorna, Plotzen, Lehn, Kohlweese and Sornssig, as well as the woods which were on their left flank.

The headquarters of the King were at Rodewitz; and the position of the two armies as I have stated

<sup>1</sup> The Lattorff regiment occupied Pommritz, Forcade's encamped on the right wing, and Krockow's dragoons behind the left wing of the second line.

it was explained to me by the King, who showed me the places on the map. He made me repeat my lesson thoroughly; I wrote it down even, and showed it to him. If I set this lesson down here, just as it was given to me, it is in order that, by following the respective positions, you may the better judge the outcome. It is enough and perhaps too much to have attempted, according to my oracle, to describe the battle of Zorndorf, without undertaking as well the description of the battle of Hochkirchen. I will confine myself to relating a few of the details of this affair, as they were given me by the King; but before giving them, I must return to our arrival at Rodewitz.

10th Octo-  
ber.

I was called in the evening at six o'clock. I found His Majesty busy with the outline of an epistle to his sister, the Margravine of Baireuth. For the last few days, he had been receiving disquieting news of the health of this princess. This news made him very anxious, and he sought to relieve his sorrow by writing to her.

“ You see me very gloomy, my friend, and in great anguish of mind over the state of my sister. I am engaged on something for her at this moment. I have made a rough sketch of an epistle for her, which I should like to work at carefully during the time of our stay in these quarters. This sister is infinitely dear to me. If I had the misfortune to lose her, there would be nothing left to attach me to life. It is to her, I think I have told you, that I for the most part owe the little I am worth. It

was she who often caused me to stop and consider and to moderate my hastiness of temper, which used often to go too far. She urged me on to work ; she made me feel that every man, every prince, and especially a prince who is called to govern, should contract early in life the habit of work, that he should employ all his abilities and all his strength in the acquirement of a stock of solid learning, so that by its means he should be in a position to govern well. She painted for me those indolent, voluptuous and unenlightened princes, who would not and could not do anything for themselves, who were always at the mercy of those who surrounded them, and were for ever doing irreparable harm by the advice and at the instigation of these, they themselves, although otherwise kindly enough, being overwhelmed by public hatred and contempt. ‘How can you, my dear brother,’ she said to me one day when I was under arrest in my room, ‘if you do not cultivate with all your power the abilities which nature has conferred on you, work successfully for the happiness and tranquillity of subjects whom you will govern one day by wise regulations and useful institutions ? And what a pleasure it will be for you, my dear brother, when you have fulfilled the duties of the crown, which are so fine when you acquit yourself well of them, to be able to devote to the muses and to the arts—a knowledge of which I recommend you to acquire—those moments which these duties allow us.’ It was she, finally, my friend, who, after

having inspired me with this ruling passion for study and the acquirement of knowledge, for conducting affairs myself, without being obliged to be led by others, constantly stood by me in my domestic troubles, and lightened the burden of them with the marks of an astonishing friendship. You may judge, from what I have just told you, my dear sir, whether life would have any attraction for me if I lost a sister who is so dear to me. Ah, if in order to save this sister who is perhaps no more at this very moment, if in order to prolong a life which is so precious to me, I had to give up my own gloomy life, which sooner or later is encompassed by one of a thousand accidents, with what a touching pleasure would I not make the sacrifice !”

And he wept while he spoke. I tried, by sympathising with him in his grief, which affected me a great deal, to divert it somewhat, but I was not able to succeed. His tears flowed still. He endeavoured to read to me the outline of his epistle, but, being obliged to interrupt it continually, he dismissed me, saying :

“ Why, my dear sir, should I tire you with my sad ideas ? Good evening. Come to-morrow at five o’clock, and you will find me well into my epistle.”

In fact, he was well into it, for there only remained about ten lines to write. He read his composition several times to me, and corrected several ambiguous expressions.

“ You are right, my dear sir, these expressions are not good. Besides, every line which needs a commentary in order to be understood, is certainly worthless. I want this piece to be well written. It will be as regards the sentiment, my heart warrants that. As for the verses, that is another thing, and I must be more careful on this score. When I am satisfied with my epistle, I will send it to my lord Arouet. You will agree that it will give that weasel no hold on me.”

On the following day, he spoke to me of nothing but his epistle, which he had finished. He re-read it several times to me, repeating to me several of the things he had said to me about his sister on the day of our arrival. He added, at these repetitions, that, being struck by the advice of the Margravine, he had firmly fixed it in his mind that he would never let himself be led by any one, as this was the most fatal thing that could happen, both for the prince who is led, and for his subjects, who are always the victims. On this occasion, he quoted these lines (I believe by Quinault), changing them a little : <sup>12th October.</sup> <sup>1</sup>

Le moyen de s'imaginer  
Qu'une femme me guide et qu'un homme me mène ? <sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The lines are :

Le moyen de s'imaginer  
Qu'une femme le fuie ou qu'un homme le mène ?

[‘ How is it possible to imagine that a woman will fly him or that a man will lead him ? ’]

<sup>2</sup> [‘ How is it possible to imagine that a woman will guide me or that a man will lead me ? ’]

1758, the  
13th Octo-  
ber.

This day, the eve of the battle, is especially worthy of attention. I will relate, as I have done hitherto, with truth and at some length, the conversation of His Majesty during the two hours I was with him. After having read his epistle to me, with which he appeared very satisfied, after having reiterated to me his anxieties concerning the Margravine, he spoke to me as follows :

“ Seeing that the army of the Marshal is in a position where nothing can be undertaken against it, that the position of mine, everything considered, is not of the surest, I should have marched during the night, if what I need for my march had arrived to-day from Bautzen, but the Landgrave<sup>1</sup> is dawdling away, and will probably make me miss the stroke I am meditating. He has promised me everything for to-morrow, even down to trifles ; but, my dear sir, to-morrow during the night we shall march, and this is what I have arranged : I shall cross the Löbau at Weissenberg and Gröditz ; I shall attack the Holzmühle mill, where there is a whole horde of Croats ; I shall move in the direction of Schöps in order to pitch a camp on the right flank of the enemy ; at the same time Retzow will march by way of Seifersdorf, and will attack Prince de Durlach who is encamped at Reichenbach. By this movement of my army, the Prince will be cut off from the illustrious Daun, who will no longer be able to remain in his camp at Kittlitz, for his communications with Zittau,

<sup>1</sup> [Frederick, Crown Prince of Hesse-Cassel.]



whence he draws all his supplies, will be threatened. I have already made many preparations, and in order that everything shall be thoroughly well carried out, I have put my dispositions down in writing ; they are rather good."

And he read them to me, showing me on the map the places through which he would pass.

"My present position, the large detachments I have been obliged to send away, the blow I have in mind are all considerations which make me desire my departure from here, all the more so since the people opposite us are making defensive demonstrations which do not please me. Have you heard nothing said about our camp? speak to me frankly!"

'Sire,' I said to him with that frankness which he wished, 'they say that the position of your army is dangerous, that the enemy commands your camp, and that the ground is not fitted for forming up in battle order.'

He did not answer a word to this. He returned again to his epistle, and, perceiving that it was already late, wished me good night.

"I want to be on horseback to-morrow very early."

Unfortunately, the King had to be up earlier than he thought. Between four and five o'clock, the enemy appeared with a large body of Croats, supported by regular infantry, and threw back the camp guards of cavalry which we had on our right flank, Zieten's hussars and the free companies

This 14th  
October, day  
of the battle  
of Hoch-  
kirchen.

stationed in the brushwood on the right of the camp: the battalions on this right wing scarcely had time to get under arms before the enemy attacked. Such was the beginning of this murderous battle which lasted from four o'clock in the morning until nine. The King, exposed all the while to cannon fire and often to musketry fire, his horse being wounded, gave astonishing proofs of an unshakable firmness and of that coolness which has distinguished him so much on other occasions. He retreated, in the presence of a victorious enemy, with such a bearing and in so admirable an order that the enemy did not venture to follow him. He remained between Pommritz and Hochkirchen, and, although reinforced by all his troops who had not fought, he did not leave this place, being satisfied with what he had done, and doubtless looking upon it as an advantage which he had not greatly looked for. What is certain is that the Marshal had established batteries of twenty pieces of cannon on the Stromberg, on the hill on which the left wing had encamped, and on that from which General Loudon's corps descended, to cover the retreat, should it have been forced upon them. People of the profession will give the details of this surprise and of the battle; they will make known the determined bravery which all our troops without exception showed in this unexpected<sup>1</sup> attack, the infinite resource of the King, and the

<sup>1</sup> They will say that there was not a single regiment which did not, for a certain time, drive back every enemy in front of it,

art with which he overawed the enemy by a series of admirable manœuvres. Since this is so, I will not publish my stammerings on this subject, as I was foolish enough to do on the battle of Zorn-dorf, carried away by a spectacle which was wholly new to me.

When the affair began, I was awakened by the lackey who had been on duty that night in His Majesty's quarters.<sup>1</sup>

'Get up, sir, there is a great deal of firing on our right ; the affair might become serious.'

But, as I was very tired, I went to sleep again, and it was not until after five o'clock that the people of the house, who by this time were frightened, entered my room, shouting :

'Get up, sir, for the love of God, get up, there is a battle on !'

I was soon ready. Descending with the intention of passing through the courtyard, I saw that it was full of Austrians, either deserters or prisoners we had taken. As they did not come up to me, I mounted my horse, not knowing quite where to go. Fortunately, I had not gone more than a few hundred yards when I met M. de Wodtke, a lieutenant of dragoons, who had received a bullet in his foot, which made him suffer a great deal.

'You cannot join the King, sir ; follow me. We shall perhaps arrive safely somewhere, under cover of the Prince of Würtemberg's corps or

<sup>1</sup> I lodged beneath him.

General Retzow's, which is advancing.' We even came up with the main body of our troops who were retiring, and, some time after, with a distress which I cannot describe, I saw the King on a horse covered with blood from a bullet wound it had received in the chest. He mounted another, and hastened away to give his orders to the cavalry drawn up in two lines, at long intervals, in the plain between Kreckwitz and Belgern.

All the baggage of the army and the greater part of the wounded took the road to Doberschütz, and the infantry followed them in the greatest order.

After this unfortunate affair, the army encamped a league away from the battlefield, on the heights of Spitzberg which are behind Kreckwitz, Purschwitz, Klein-Bautzen and Preititz. A brook which passes through all these villages covered the front of the camp. The town of Bautzen was half a league from the right of the army, and the left was covered by the marshes and ponds which are between Malschwitz and Preititz, and which are joined to those of Belgern. The headquarters were at Doberschütz, which was covered by Lattorff's regiment.

The enemy returned to his camp at Kittlitz, a brigade of infantry, the corps of carabineers and some grenadiers encamping on the battlefield.

An hour after our arrival at headquarters, an incident happened there which would have been amusing in any other circumstances and if it had not angered the King. He was writing letters in

his room, when an officer of the guard, in a state of great excitement, entered and said :

‘Sire, the enemy has appeared in the village.’

At these words, the King ran out impetuously, shouting : “ My horse ! ” The whole of his suite shouted likewise, and there was a general alarm in all the headquarters. The King went forward before his horse arrived, and asked the first hussars he met : “ *Kinder*, what is the matter ? ” There was no answer, and they went on at a gallop. Then he had the road barred by his guard to stop the other hussars who were following.

“ What the devil is the meaning of all this hubbub ? ”

A hussar said to him : ‘ Eh, Your Majesty, my comrades who are running away in front have taken a few geese from the peasants, who started to cry out like the riff-raff they are. That is all that is the matter.’

The King’s anger was extreme. He lectured with the greatest energy the officer of the guard who had given this false alarm, and all those who at that moment came before him. He returned to his room, sent for the officer, and said to him everything that it was possible to imagine to humiliate a man. The officer repeated the whole of this outburst to me, and it can be better imagined than rendered.

I was called on this unfortunate day at three o’clock in the afternoon. My heart, which was full of sorrow, feared this first moment in which I

Continuation of 14th  
October,  
1758.

should see the King. I entered his room in a state of extreme emotion. He came up to me with a rather open air, and, in a quiet voice, he repeated to me these lines from *Mithridate*,<sup>1</sup> looking at me in a very singular manner :

Enfin, après un an, tu me revois,<sup>2</sup> Arbate :  
 Non plus, comme autrefois, cet heureux Mithridate  
 Qui de *Vienne* toujours balançant le destin,  
 Tenait entr'elle et moi l'univers incertain.  
 Je suis vaincu.<sup>3</sup> *Daunus* <sup>4</sup> a saisi l'avantage  
 D'une nuit qui laissait peu de place au courage :  
 Mes soldats presque nus, dans l'ombre intimidés,  
 Les rangs de toutes parts, mal pris et mal gardés,  
 Le désordre partout redoublant les alarmes,  
 Nous-mêmes contre nous tournant nos propres armes,  
 Les cris que les rochers renvoyaient plus affreux,  
 Enfin toute l'horreur d'un combat ténébreux :  
 Que pouvait la valeur <sup>5</sup> dans ce trouble funeste !  
 Les uns sont morts, *mon cher*, j'ai sauvé tout le reste. <sup>6</sup>

This declamation reassured me, and made me a little easier in my mind. After a pause of a few minutes, he said :

“ My friend, I am a poor conquered man : this is a terrible misfortune to happen to me. Ah, how

<sup>1</sup> *Mithridate*, act ii. scene 3.

<sup>2</sup> He stopped, and his voice was very agitated.

<sup>3</sup> He stopped, and was still more agitated.

<sup>4</sup> Pompée.

<sup>6</sup> He sighed at these words.

<sup>2</sup> <sup>6</sup> [‘ At last, after a year, you see me again, Arbates : no more, as formerly, that fortunate Mithridates who, holding the fate of *Vienna* always in the balance, kept the universe uncertain between it and me. I am conquered. *Daunus* took advantage of a night which left little room for courage : my soldiers almost naked, frightened in the darkness, the ranks on all sides ill-made and ill-kept, disorder everywhere increasing the alarm, ourselves against ourselves turning our own arms, the cries which the rocks threw back more frightful, finally, all the horror of a combat in darkness, what could valour do in this fatal confusion ! Some are dead, *my dear sir*, I saved all the rest.’]

limited are the views of prudence and experience, and how the future is covered with a thick veil. This is a disaster, a surprise which must be mended. We can truthfully say with François I. : All is lost, except honour. My troops fought with courage, and, as for myself, I certainly did not spare myself."

At this word, I began to speak, for, until that moment, he had not left me a moment in which to say anything.

' Yes, Sire, you were not careful enough of yourself. The whole suite, the whole army is of opinion that Your Majesty exposed yourself too much. What would become of us if we lost the father ! Those, Sire, were the words of the soldiers and of the officers, who all trembled for you.'

And this was true. I saw the tears moistening his cheeks.

"What you tell me touches me. Why, my dear sir, should I not expose myself for all these worthy people who are sacrificing their lives for me ? The peril was too great for me not to share it. The most accursed accident that has ever happened to me was in progress, and I had to risk my head and my person to save the unfortunate remains of the wreck."

' It is because that head is necessary, Sire, to save us from being wrecked that you must be careful of it.'

" Well, well, if not I, it will be my brother."

Some generals were announced.

“Here are some officers to whom I must give orders. If you are not too bored with a poor unfortunate, I beg you to come back again here for a few moments.”

I went out. At five o'clock I was called again. The King seemed to me gloomier and more down-cast than he was when I first saw him.

“My dear Marshal Keith is no more. This is a real loss to society and to the army. What will my lord, his brother, say about the loss of a brother of whom he was exceedingly fond! So soon as I have a little more leisure, I will write and assure him that I share his grief as if it were my own, and I will celebrate in verse our common loss. It is impossible for me to tell you how many particular reasons I have to regret the poor Marshal; I have also many for sincerely regretting Prince Francis of Brunswick. He was killed by a cannon-ball: he had ability combined with marked bravery; this bravery is hereditary in the family. What a number of brave men I am losing, my friend, and how I detest this trade to which the blind chance of my birth has condemned me. But I have upon me the means of ending the play, when it becomes unbearable to me.”

Doubtless I put on an air, at these words, which struck the King. He said to me:

“Lord, you are changing colour!”

He undid his collar, pulled out from beneath his shirt a ribbon, at the end of which was an oval golden box which rested on his chest.



“There, my friend, is all that is required to put an end to the tragedy.”

He opened the little box, in which were eighteen pills, which we counted.

“These pills,” he said, “are of opium. The dose is quite sufficient to take me to that dark bourn whence we do not return.”

After showing me this, he hung it round his neck again, and let it fall into its place on his chest.

“Now, my dear sir, you will be kind enough to help me fasten my collar, for I am so clumsy as not to be able to do this, and I do not wish anybody except yourself to know of my little resource.”

I fastened the collar.

“All this,” he said, “will not seem very orthodox or in conformity with your Calvinistic maxims; but you are not in my place, so you are not in a very good position to judge of the necessity of my little box. You will acknowledge, however, that, since you have known me, the position in which I have been and am still requires more than firmness and steadfastness to support me, and am I rash enough, my dear sir, to hope for this *more*? I tell you roundly that if a new misfortune happens to me, I certainly shall not survive the ruin and desolation of my country. That is my way of thinking. Do not go and imagine that I propose to take a Sertorius or a Cato for a model. The State and not renown will decide me; and then, my dear sir, if I had the cruel misfortune to be

taken in battle, would you have me survive this abominable humiliation? No, no, my friend, you, as orthodox as you are, will acknowledge that

Quand on a tout perdu, quand on n'a plus d'espoir,  
La vie est un opprobre et la mort un devoir.<sup>1</sup>

“This is what makes my box dear to me. My enemies would be very sharp, if they discovered it.”

The King did not leave me the time to say a word about this speech which he had just made. He dismissed me, wishing me a more peaceful night than his own.

“To-morrow morning, I will perhaps send for you, and will tell you what we have to hope or fear. Good evening.”

This conversation, which lasted from five o'clock to eight, troubled me particularly. I passed a night as uneasy as that of the Monarch, who was too agitated in too many ways to enjoy the rest of which he seemed to me to be in need.

This 15th  
October,  
1758.

I had occasion to speak during the morning to several well-informed officers who talked to me of the unfortunate battle. The camp was certainly imperfect in many respects, they told me; there were no means of defending it. They had been assured that, several days before the battle, Marshal Keith, whom they sincerely regretted, had represented to the King the danger of this camp, that he had informed the King of his doubts

<sup>1</sup> Voltaire, *Méropé*. [‘When you have lost all, when you have no further hope, life is a shame and death a duty.’]

regarding all these demonstrations of defence, abattis, redoubts, still more numerous batteries, which the enemy were making, demonstrations which, according to him, announced a coming attack, and that the King had not listened to these excellent remonstrances. These gentlemen told me that it was not surprising, for the rest, that the movements of the enemy to attack us remained unknown to us, since the night was very dark, the march was made over ground which was under cover, and our patrols could not get through on account of the Croats who, occupying all the woods, masked the manœuvre of their army, and who, what is more, by cutting down trees during the whole of this dark night, prevented us, by the noise they made, from hearing the transport of the artillery. They next assured me that, on account of the thick fog which did not clear off until about eight o'clock, and which was mingled with gunpowder smoke and the smoke of Hochkirchen in flames, it was almost impossible to counter all the manœuvres of the enemy, for you could not see fifteen paces in front of you; that, however, in spite of all these drawbacks and the advantage possessed by the enemy, we should have certainly repulsed him, if we had been able to oppose the infantry attacking the village with seven or eight battalions at once, but that our regiments, which, in endeavouring to hold this post, attacked one after the other as they arrived, could not but be beaten in detail, as unfortunately they had been,

after having gained some advantage, however, at the beginning of their attacks.

‘What a lot of *ifs*,’ I replied; ‘with them, you might do many fine things.’

Finally, they all agreed in giving the greatest praise to the King for his firmness and presence of mind and to the troops for their bravery. Our losses exceeded 5800 men killed or taken prisoners; those of the enemy could not have been less.

I was not called in the morning, as the King had made me hope, but in the evening at about seven o’clock. He seemed to me exceedingly cast down.

“I have not shut my eyes the whole night; just as I would be dropping off to sleep, a thousand melancholy ideas presented themselves to tear me from the sleep which I needed so greatly. In spite of the prostration in which I was when I rose, I have had to work like a nigger the whole of this long day; my labours have only just finished. I cannot yet, as I thought yesterday, tell you anything positive about our present position. What I perceive—which should reassure you—is that we shall pull through all right. If my expectation unfortunately proves vain, my dear sir, my box is quite ready.”

And he placed his hand on his breast.

“I used to carry this box in a pocket of my breeches; but having reflected that those who might take me would be scum enough to search me, I had a small ring fitted to my box, through which

I passed the ribbon which descends from my neck to my chest, as you saw. It would be damnable if they unearthed it from there. I hope that I should not be stripped as naked as my hand. I cannot tell you, my friend, how much this box makes me easy in my mind. Consider for a moment what a horror it would be for me to be a prisoner of those people and at their mercy. No, my soul is not made for dishonour and affronts. You will acknowledge, my friend, that my career has been a very harsh and cruel one, and that the lot I drew in the great lottery is a very fatal one ; but I must keep it, be satisfied with it, and do all that is humanly possible to alter chance. And we must not forget, my friend, that it is good that kings should be like all other men, and be sometimes proved by misfortune. Vanity and pride, like the fever, can lead a man on at a great pace. I confess to you that I cannot yet conceive why we were surprised. It could only have happened because of the extreme negligence of our outposts. Although these misfortunes only occur once in a hundred years, it is none the less a disgrace for which I shall not be consoled until I have wiped it out completely and absolutely. But let us leave this painful subject, and go and try whether sleep will be more propitious to us. Good night. To-morrow we shall perhaps know more."

His Majesty sent for me this morning at seven o'clock. When I entered, he came up to me :

This 16th  
October,  
1758.

' I can now tell you, sir, and I can say it to the

very famous Marshal, what was said to Hannibal : ‘Great Daun, you can conquer, but you do not know how to take advantage of your victory. The battle which you fought with me, and which you won in the deepest darkness, is a useless battle. You sacrificed in vain a host of unfortunates who will demand from you an account of their spilt blood : you have it on your conscience.’ Banter apart, my dear sir, I shall come out of this all right. The Marshal will have no benefit whatever from his success. I see the means of frustrating all his plans, and of ending so-so this painful campaign. In spite of this glimmer of hope which has cheered me, I wept bitterly this morning for my dear Marshal. I regret him more than I can tell you ; he had wide views, and what he saw, he saw pre-eminently well ; and he was devoted to me with the greatest possible zeal and disinterestedness. How shall I be able to make good this sad loss ! A few days before the battle, he gave me still further proofs of his attachment for me. That he should have been killed, and that I who have so often exposed myself in so many battles (and I think *that* justice will be done me) have never been anything more than lightly hit, is very extraordinary, don’t you think ? I am now going to get on my horse and see my camp. Come back for a few moments this evening at about six o’clock.”

I went, not at six o’clock, but immediately after his dinner, which only lasted a quarter of an hour.

“My dear sir,” he said to me, with tears in his eyes, “read that letter.”

The Marquis d’Adhémar, grand-master of the court of the Margravine of Baireuth, announced that this princess was very ill and so weak that her life was feared for. I handed the letter back to the King.

“Ah, my dear sir, that is a preparatory letter. It is certain that my dear sister is no more. I received this fatal letter on my return from my ride to the camp, and, to complete my grief, I was obliged to compose my face so that those whom I had invited should not perceive the sorrow by which I was overwhelmed. Nearly all my people are frightened; when they think they see blackness on my face, they imagine immediately that the affairs of the State are desperate.”

He then recited to me these lines from *Iphigénie* :

Juste ciel ! c’est ainsi qu’assurant ta vengeance,  
 Tu romps tous les ressorts de ma vaine prudence !  
 Encore, si je pouvais, libre dans mon malheur,  
 Par des larmes au moins soulager ma douleur !  
 Triste destin des rois ! esclaves que nous sommes  
 Et des rigueurs du sort et des discours des hommes,  
 Nous nous voyons sans cesse assiégés de témoins—  
 Et les plus malheureux osent pleurer le moins. <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Iphigénie*, act i. scene 5. [‘Just heaven ! is it thus that, making sure of your vengeance, you break all the mainsprings of my vain prudence ! Even if I could, free in my misfortune, at least relieve my sorrow with tears ! Sad fate of kings ! slaves that we are both of the harshness of fate and of the speeches of men ; we see ourselves continually besieged by witnesses, and the most unfortunate dare weep the least.’]

He said to me again, after having stopped a moment at the end of the last line :

“My affectionate sister is certainly no more. What do you think, my friend, that she is no more ? ”

And he wept greatly. “Speak, my dear sir, she is certainly no more. Do not seek to deceive me.”

‘Sire, this great misfortune is possible, and because they have written to Your Majesty, I have every reason to fear that you will be called upon to make use of all your philosophy and of that steadfastness of soul which places you so much above other men.’

“More than steadfastness is needed to bear up under such losses, my dear sir. I have enough of it to make good the misfortune of the 14th ; once let my brother arrive here, and you will see that Daun will derive no advantage from his blow against us ; but how can I make good this loss which everything announces, how shall I recover this sister, this worthy, this adorable sister, who has been so fond of me since my tenderest youth ! In writing my epistle to this sister of mine, describing to her all the ardour of my affection, was I to believe that she would be so soon taken away from me ! Are all the misfortunes about to fall on me ! How I pity you, my friend, for being compelled to be a continual witness of events which spring up each moment to torment me, and what a sad life I lead you.”

‘Certainly, it is sad by the very fact that I see



Your Majesty in sorrow. I should esteem myself happy if I could contribute to the relief of that sorrow.'

After having shed many tears and said many things relative to his situation, he dismissed me, begging me not to go too far away from headquarters, as he might perhaps send for me at any moment.

I had had some difficulty in dropping off to sleep, but finally I was sleeping profoundly when, at two o'clock in the morning, a lackey of the King's came and ordered me to present myself as soon as I was dressed. I easily imagined what was the cause of this order, and the lackey confirmed my suspicion.

17th October, 1758.

'A courier has brought,' he said, 'the news of the death of the Margravine of Baireuth. The King rose immediately; he is now occupied in writing letters.'

When I arrived, I found him sobbing. I stood there in his presence several minutes before he could say a word to me.

At length, he cried: "My sister is lost for me, without hope of return, my dear sir; I shall never see her again. This is the most horrible blow which could have been dealt to me; and so I lose my mother, my brother, my sister, all who are dear to me; and I suffer these losses one after the other. One loss always accompanies another.<sup>1</sup> Soon, alas,

<sup>1</sup> After the battle of Kolin, he learned the news of the death of his mother; while raising the siege of Olmütz, or on the point of raising it, that of the Prince of Prussia, his brother, and that of the Margravine a few days after the surprise of Hochkirchen.

I shall have no more friends or relations ; death is carrying them all off. Mine is a very unfortunate life.”

The heart-rending situation in which I saw His Majesty affected me deeply. I said to him everything that can be said at such moments to alleviate sorrow, sympathising with that which he was experiencing, and enlarging on the reasons which he had to grieve for and regret so tenderly loved a sister. I appealed to his philosophy, whose assistance he had extolled on certain occasions, although on others he had spoken to me of its absolute insufficiency. I appealed to that steadfastness and courage on which all the world had its eyes, and which he admired. But the King, given up to his sorrow and weeping all the while, only replied to me by a few monosyllables, praying heaven to have pity on him and his situation.

Being dismissed at about five o'clock, I wrote the following letter to the King, and sent it immediately :

‘ I acknowledge that the misfortunes of Your Majesty are extreme, and that the loss you have sustained in so dear a sister is the most fatal blow that could have been dealt to you ; I am well aware of the whole extent of your feelings for the one who will be the object of your eternal regrets ; I have mourned exceedingly the evils which you are experiencing, and I mourn them still as if they were my own.

But, Sire, nothing remains long extreme. Your Majesty's greatness of soul, a whole people that idolises you, a whole army that worships you, a Providence that directs all the events of life for the wisest and most useful purposes, all this will be for Your Majesty, I hope, a subject of consolation. No, my dear King will not always be unhappy.'

A quarter of an hour after sending my letter, I was called again. When I entered, he came up to me and embraced me. His tears, which wetted my cheeks, touched me keenly. He perceived my emotion :

"I thank you for your letter," he said, "but, alas, nothing can help me in this sorrowful moment ; do not condemn my tears. Were there ever more legitimate tears ? "

'Ah, Sire, I am very far from condemning them——'

"If all the evils which afflict me (and he was then referring to a point in my letter) are directed by a Providence, as it may be, it must be hoped that it will have pity on me ; and there is every reason to believe that there is one, do you think ? "

'Very strongly, Sire. I also believe that this idea is the only one that is capable of helping us to bear the often painful burden of life.'

"But believe me also that a box which you may have at your disposal is yet another good consolation."

Such were the first moments after the last battle and the sad news of the death of the Margravine. I set them down faithfully for myself because I wished to have a clear idea of the heart and soul of this extraordinary prince, and I relate them with the same faithfulness for those who will be curious to know him in the different painful situations in which he found himself.

13th and  
19th Octo-  
ber.

I was called in the afternoon again at about three o'clock, and remained until seven o'clock, as also on the 18th and 19th. As the conversation still turned on the loss which he had just suffered, and he said to me on this sad subject all that he had already said, I will not give the details, although I wrote these conversations down at the moment to compare them with those which had passed previously ; but what I will not pass in silence is that, during the first four days after the sad news which the King had received, he had the shutters of his room closed the whole of the day, so that I could scarcely distinguish His Majesty. Once the shutters were opened a little because he wished to write a letter to some one of his sisters.

This 20th  
October,  
1758.

Prince Henry, who on the orders of the King had left the camp at Gamig on the 18th, arrived with eight battalions and five squadrons of hussars. This was an appreciable reinforcement, both on account of the troops and especially of the leader who brought them. The interview between the King and the Prince must have been very touching, since His Majesty said to me in the evening :

“ Ah, my dear sir, how my brother and I wept over our common losses! We endeavoured to console ourselves mutually. The arrival of my good brother will be a great help to me. I have every reason to hope that the affairs of the State will now go well. As for those of the heart, they will remain irreparable. My box, my friend, my box.” And he repeated to me then what he had told me on the day on which he had shown it to me.

The King who, since the last battle, had made no mention of troops, camps or marches, began on this evening to speak on these subjects.

“ I have altered my order of battle, and have placed in the second line the regiments which suffered most on that unfortunate day. The great Marshal has left his camp at Kittlitz, and has approached nearer to us. His right—see the map—touches the Schwedenschanze and his left rests on the pass of Jenkwitz. The whole of his first line occupies the chain of hills which are between the two supporting points, and makes this concave curve. General Loudon, to prolong the left of the army, is perched on the hills which touch the village of Jenkwitz and extend towards Ober-Keyna. The Marshal is fortifying his camp beyond all measure with entrenchments and redoubts, and is stuffing all the hills and his two wings with cannon. What a blessing it is; but the dear Marshal will be deceived in a few days, I’ll answer for it. Although I appear to be lying quiet, I am however doing a great deal, by the expeditions I

have ordered to repulse the Swedes and to throw back the Russians. The news I am receiving of these barbarous Cossacks makes your hair stand up on end. They are burning and killing everything in my poor country. Their march is a continual blood-stained procession of every imaginable horror. I hope that divine justice will avenge me one of these days on leaders who order or who permit such abominations.”

This 21st  
October,  
1758.

The King seemed to me this evening much sadder than the day before. He wished to read one of Fléchier's funeral orations, but he had scarcely read a page when he left his book.

“I cannot continue, for in fact I do not know what I am reading. My mind is not in a condition to do any coherent reading. I tried this morning. I could not even read some of my rhapsodies which I wanted to go over, to divert me from the sorrowful ideas that weigh on me and plague me.”

A rather singular thing happened at this moment. His Majesty, while speaking to me of his sorrowful ideas, heard some one talking near the shutter of his window, which was not quite shut. He opened the window very gently, and listened for a good quarter of an hour, when he shut the window in question with some noise. A few moments afterwards, he asked me whether I had heard anything relative to the losses we had suffered in the affair of the 14th.

‘Nothing, Sire.’

“Yet people are rather inclined to inform them-

selves by arguing about what was done on such a day, what might have been done, and about what preceded a battle; and this is no harm, for our ideas are clarified and widened by being exchanged.—It would be astonishing if you had heard nothing concerning our surprise.”

‘I had the honour to tell you at Rodewitz what I had heard concerning the position we had taken up, and since then people have never stopped talking (which was true) of Your Majesty’s firmness, of your manœuvres to save the rest of the army, and of the courage of your troops.’

The King made a slight grimace, and wished me good evening.

“Until to-morrow at the same hour!”

When I arrived in my room, I found Captain de M(arwitz), an aide-de-camp, awaiting me there.

‘Tell me, I entreat, what was the cause of the shutting of that window with so much violence.’

I related to him all that had happened, and the captain, in turn, gave me an account of his conversation with one of his friends.

‘Leaning against the wall near this confounded shutter, I was speaking to my friend, who had asked me the real reason why I had been under arrest, and what the King had said to me at the camp of Hochkirchen. His Majesty, I was saying, having ordered me in one of our previous marches to pitch a camp, I carried out his orders. As he had been seeking for some time for an occasion to reprimand me, he seized on my camp, and said the

most humiliating things to me about it: "Your camp is detestable and against all the rules of the most common sense," were his most moderate expressions. I was placed under arrest, and remained so until our arrival at Hochkirchen. The King ordered me to follow him, when he pitched his fine camp, and, when he had finished his labours, "There, M. de M(arwitz)," he said to me, with that ironical tone of voice which you know, "that is the way to pitch a camp. Learn not to take things lightly, and especially things of such great importance as a camp well or ill chosen. I'll set the devil on your track, if another time you do not carry out with more attention what I expect of you." This was not pleasant, my friend, but the lesson was very ridiculous, and all the more since of all camps pitched or to be pitched that of Hochkirchen was the worst thought out; but a much more amusing thing still was the reply he gave to General Seydlitz. This general had begged him to withdraw his infantry, which was being sacrificed uselessly. "But," said the King to him, "if I withdraw it, I shall lose the battle."—"Well," answered Seydlitz, "win it then, Your Majesty"; and he galloped off to rejoin the cavalry. That, sir, is what I said to my friend. It was an imprudence, I acknowledge, but why the deuce does he want to see all and hear all? What a mortal curiosity! If His Confounded Majesty heard my conversation, he will never pardon me for it.'

'Perhaps he did not hear all of it.'



‘All the worse, sir; I would rather he had not lost a word. If he heard badly or only half heard, his imagination will work up that half, and will make a whole of it that will have no end.<sup>1</sup> If the King appears to you directly or indirectly to make any allusion to my conversation, do me the kindness to inform me of what he says to you.’

I promised to do this.

The King, who seemed to me pretty well, at least much better than I had seen him during the time of our stay at Doberschütz, sent for me in the morning merely to tell me that we should start in the evening, that I should put my kit in order, and that, if he were successful in what he had planned, I should have occasion to rejoice and lighten the darkness which he had been casting over me for some time.

23rd October, 1758.

“These darkneses of the soul are the fruits of my unfortunate star. Say nothing about our departure. I shall not let it be known until this afternoon. It is important, as you will see, that my march should be kept secret.

“As General Harsch has invested Neisse, and is preparing to besiege it, I must go to the help of the place, and, then, there is neither forage nor

<sup>1</sup> The aide-de-camp was mistaken; during the winter quarters he said to me himself: ‘I should have thought that the King would have frowned on me until the end of the ages; but I got off with a singular kind of punishment; he read me a short composition he had written against satirists, and while reading it to me, he kept giving me light taps. I saw at once that my conversation had been very much in the mind of the writer; but I pretended to notice nothing, and took it as said.’

provisions here. My plan is not so easy as you might imagine. I have to reach Görlitz before the great Daun, who is only one march away from it, and, with the roundabout way which I shall have to take, I am two very heavy and very difficult marches away. Daun has established posts everywhere, and I must baffle the vigilance of the illustrious man. To baffle it successfully, I have made a great number of demonstrations; they will perhaps throw him off the scent; but we must not presume too much: to-morrow we shall know what to think about it. At ten o'clock, the army will begin to march in two columns; my brother Henry will form the rear-guard. Good day. Until to-morrow if it is possible. Be prepared for a diabolical march."

This 24th  
October, at  
Ullersdorf.

I saw His Majesty only at the moment he was descending from his horse. It was nearly five o'clock.

"What a march, my dear sir, what a march! We shall strike camp to-morrow, for our most excellent lord Daun who opened his eyes wide when he saw what I am after, will make for Görlitz, and I shall have the honour of being there first. I am going to bed, for I am more sleepy than hungry. We took an officer and a hundred and a few odd rascallions who were not expecting us. The enemy certainly imagined that my army was making for Spremberg, since he saw or knew that the march of the supply column had been directed to the rear on Kummerau; but he will open his

eyes when he sees that we have passed by the Schafberg. If we meet M. Daun in the plains of Görlitz, there may very well be a few rogues less in the world to-morrow. Good evening.”

At five o'clock in the evening, I was called. The King was studying his large map : The Görlitz, 25th  
October,  
1758.

“ My dear sir, there were very few rogues lost, but, on the other hand, we captured eight officers and 418 men, whom we have taken prisoners, of the corps of carabineers and horse-grenadiers. At two pieces a head, if they all have them, count up how much that will make *in summa*.

“ I marched in three columns, and I formed the advance-guard with eight battalions, all the dragoons and all the hussars of the army. My right wing rests on Gierbigsdorf; my left touches Görlitz; see my position (he showed it to me on the map). I have set up my ovens, and the two hundred quintals of flour which the enemy had the goodness to leave behind for us will be very useful to us at the moment. To-morrow, I will tell you more. I am so excessively tired that I can scarcely keep my eyes open (and this was so); you can judge how those of my understanding are blocked up. Sleep well and in peace, since we were victors on the march.”

“ Last night,” said the King when I presented myself on this day, the 26th, at three o'clock, 26th, 27th,  
28th, 29th  
October, at  
Görlitz. “ was the only night on which I have slept a little since the sad loss I have suffered; so that I am quite another man. I can at least think with a

little consecutiveness, and I can tell you in confidence and in a sober-minded way, that the affairs of the State are no longer in a desperate condition ; but, my friend, those of the heart are still. I hope that my army will find that I have pretty well repaired my mistake of the 14th. If Retzow had immediately occupied the position which I had told him to take, if my rogues of free battalions had been more vigilant, if the Landgrave had not tried to spare the doors of the barns, if he had burned them to cook my bread, I should not have been at Rodewitz on the 14th, and if and if—; but do not think that I am trying to justify myself. I have committed mistakes and follies ; may it please God that they are the last, and, as it is human to make them, O God, give me the wit, if it must be, to mend them splendidly : that is almost a prayer in the Chauvet-Calvin manner. I would willingly pray for the cessation of all these stupidities on both sides, so that we might all go quietly home ; it is high time these horrors ended. How tormented are all the peoples ; how that poor Saxony is being tormented ; how it is being oppressed on all sides, its so-called friends not being the least. I learned this morning from my host that the Austrians, when speaking of these good Saxons, their friends, do not call them otherwise than this Lutheran scum. This is not very edifying ; to the harm which you do to your friends should not be added that of speaking of them in a tone of contempt which they do not deserve.”

The King, being very busy with these two marches and the different arrangements they demanded, appeared to me less affected and less sad. He had spoken to me but very lightly of his loss, and his conversation, without being gay and animated, had not that gloomy tone which it had at Dober-schütz; but this gloominess reappeared during the last three days of our stay at Görlitz. During the whole of this latter time, there was nothing but regrets for his loss, complaints about his unhappy lot, talk of the means of delivering himself from it all by his box, if his fate continued to weigh too heavily on him. I tried in vain to put other ideas before him; he repulsed them all; and I therefore condoled with him, assuring him that I keenly sympathised with him in his sorrow. My language seemed to calm him.

Having learned that one of the inhabitants of Görlitz, a man very well to do, had had constructed a model of the Holy Sepulchre, I went to see this monument; this man had made three journeys to that country of Palestine formerly so celebrated in the Crusades. On the return from his first voyage, he perceived that he had not taken several dimensions correctly, and he started back immediately to take them again. On his arrival at Görlitz, he still had doubts, and he made his third voyage to clear them up. It seemed to me from the explanation I was given that several points regarding this monument were exceedingly doubtful.

30th Octo-  
ber, at  
Lauban.

We started early in the morning from Görlitz ; the infantry passed the Neisse on trestle-bridges, and the cavalry by the fords. After this crossing, the army formed up in two columns. The King with the troops which had crossed the river on the previous day marched by way of Schönborn and Nieder-Geilsdorf towards Lichtenau ; he led this first column. The second marched by way of Hermsdorf, Lauterbach, Pfaffendorf, Ober-Geilsdorf and Schreibersdorf. Prince Henry commanded the rear-guard, and this rear-guard followed the first column.

General Vela pursued it and bombarded it a good deal ; when it defiled through Schönborn, the Prince had artillery placed on the other side of the village ; the troops passed through the defile, and set fire to the houses which stood on both sides of it. Continuing his march by way of Geilsdorf, he was stopped by a defile through which the cavalry of the first column was still passing. This gave the Croats the opportunity of slipping into the woods which bordered the road which the Prince was to take, and they exchanged fire with the last battalions of the rear-guard, and this lasted until Prince Henry had passed through Geilsdorf, which was also fired to cover the retreat. The King encamped his army on the heights behind Geilsdorf, the right resting on a wood occupied by the free companies and the *chasseurs* ; the village of Lichtenau was in the centre of the army, and it was occupied by a regiment and six battalions of the

second line. The left rested on a hill covered by a wood, where other free companies were stationed. Werner's hussars encamped in front of this wing, and Puttkammer's on the Galgenberg; the supply column was parked near Lauban. That is all the King told me on the evening of his arrival.

On the following day, he spoke to me only of his march, of the movements and the good defence made by his brother, and of an enormous blunder committed by the general of his guards, M. de Bardeleben, who, not having occupied in time a hill which ordinary common-sense would have demanded his doing, had exposed the troops to musketry fire in which a hundred men and several officers had been lost; General Bülow was wounded in this rear-guard affair.<sup>1</sup>

“As my brother ably bombarded the enemy; it is to be presumed that they lost much more than we did.”

It had been reported to His Majesty that Captain Zetmar of Zieten's hussars had killed Loudon with a pistol shot.

“That would not be so bad,” he said, “but I don't believe a word of it. Loudon would not have been so ill-advised as to go about exchanging pistol shots with hussars, although, by the way, he is as brave as he is intelligent. It is true that in action, according to what I have been told, he is carried away beyond all measure; but it remains

<sup>1</sup> The King could not suffer this general after this incident; and the latter left his service finally to pass into that of Hesse.

to be seen whether this is true. For the rest, the question leaves me altogether indifferent."

This 1st  
November,  
1758.

The King resolved to march to Neisse himself with 28 battalions and 68 squadrons, to raise the siege, and to leave Prince Henry in the mountains of Silesia with almost as many troops, so that he might keep an eye on Marshal Daun and prevent him from following to Neisse. With this idea, he marched, on the 1st, at daybreak, and arrived at Löwenberg, where I was not called; on the 2nd, at Pombsen, His Majesty sent me orders to come at four o'clock.

This 2nd  
November,  
1758, at  
Pombsen.

"I received on my arrival a letter from Voltaire. Although it increased my sorrow, it yet gave me pleasure. The unfortunate love to be spoken to of their afflictions. Read his letter, I beg you, and let me hear it."

M. de Voltaire expressed his keen regrets for the death of the Margravine, whom he praised with great discrimination, and for the ills from which the King, whom he thought was unwell, was suffering. The King wept while I was reading this letter, which he thought touching.

"Here is the reply," he said, still weeping, "which I have already written to our good Voltaire who shares my grief so keenly."

This audience was very melancholy; those which followed were not less so.

This 3rd  
November,  
at Jauernick.

The army arrived on the 3rd at Jauernick, having made thirteen miles in three days. It rested on the 4th. During these two days in this



spot, the King read half of the funeral oration on Turenne by Fléchier, continually making a melancholy application of different passages to his own afflictions. On the 5th, he marched to Girlsdorf.<sup>1</sup> This march was of four miles. Although General Harsch had stopped his bombardment of Neisse, and had even sent away his artillery, His Majesty resolved to march on him, with the idea that he might perhaps have a desire to await us, and to give battle to us. In the evening, he called me for a moment, and finished the funeral oration which he had begun the evening before.

<sup>1</sup> 5th November, at Girlsdorf.

I was called rather early. The march we had made since daybreak had been rather difficult. The King, however, did not seem at all fatigued.

<sup>1</sup> 6th November, at Gross-Nossen.

“I learn from all sides that M. de Harsch withdrew yesterday from Neisse, and that he has encamped between Weitz and Giessmansdorf, where General Wied’s corps, detached from the Marshal’s army, joined him. In spite of the great reinforcements he has received, M. Harsch did not condescend to wait and measure swords with me. He contented himself with leaving the trenches occupied only. My brave Treskow, having learned this, made a sortie yesterday at two o’clock in the afternoon, and fairly captured Colonel Marquis de Gravisi with 7 officers and nearly 500 men. A hundred others took advantage of the opportunity to desert, and the road to the

<sup>1</sup> Reinforced with 30 pieces of 12, which he had sent for from Schweidnitz.

town. He has just sent me word that to-day at six o'clock in the morning the redoubts and the parallels were abandoned, and that M. de Harsch, after having set fire to the store of fascines, crossed the Neisse at Glumpinglau, burned the bridges, and marched to Ziegenhals.

“ Thus, my dear sir, there is a siege raised. We shall certainly find a large number of knick-knacks in the works which the worthy Harsch has abandoned to us :

Livre en mes faibles mains mes puissans ennemis,  
 Confonds dans ses conseils une reine cruelle,  
 Daigne, daigne, mon Dieu, sur *Kaunitz* et sur elle  
 Répandre cet esprit d'imprudence et d'erreur,  
 De la chute des rois funeste avant-coureur.

“ Do you think, my friend, that I say my prayer with that unction which will lead to its being granted? Do you think that I say it in good faith? ”

‘ I do not doubt it in the least, Sire. If everybody prayed with the earnestness which Your Majesty uses at this moment, we should obtain more often what we ask for.’

“ Well, then, you will often hear me say with the same earnestness : Deign, deign, O God, etc. To-morrow I am going, well escorted, to Neisse.<sup>1</sup> If I do not return too late, I will send for you. Good evening, and a good night's rest. We shall be in safety in this village, for there are no less than fifteen battalions billeted in it.”

<sup>1</sup> He took Würtemberg and Krockow's dragoons and Werner's hussars. The Prince of Würtemberg commanded this cavalry escort.

The King returned very late from Neisse, and I was not called. He went to bed immediately on his arrival, and started off next day with the whole of the army, which marched in two columns. I went to His Majesty at four o'clock.

7th November.

This 8th November, at Girlsdorf.

“I was very tired yesterday with my little frolic to Neisse; my blood was so upset by it that I could not get a wink of sleep. To amuse myself a little, I begged M. Guichard to do me the honour of dining with me, and I played a little prank on him. ‘M. Guichard,’ I said to him, ‘our ride to-day was a fairly long one; doubtless, you have as great an appetite as I have.’—‘Yes, Sire, I have all the more appetite seeing that there were so many people yesterday at Gross-Nossen, that it was impossible to obtain anything, even for money; so that I am almost fasting.’—‘A moment’s patience, Captain, and we will reward you.’”

The soup was brought in; the King served the captain, and as the latter was about to take a spoonful: “‘By the way, Captain, tell me that story of the chambermaid in London whom you saved from some scoundrels who were trying to violate her.<sup>1</sup> It is an interesting episode.’”

“The captain began, not without looking at his soup. I finished mine; the plates were taken away; and the first service was brought in. I gave the captain a suitable portion, begging him to continue his story, which delighted me. I listened and ate while M. Guichard made great

<sup>1</sup> He had told this story to the King at Landshut.

eyes at his plate which was taken away like the first. When I had finished eating, the joke was repeated at the second service, and this ended like the first. I thanked the captain for his kindness. I assured him that to save a poor innocent girl from a rape which she had every reason to fear was worth much more than all possible dinners; that the fine action he had done was worthy of being sung; that if one of these days my mind were freer, I would draw up for him at a dinner the plan of a tragedy of which the captain would be the principal character. 'You are pleased to jest, Sire, but I assure you that tragedies have been written on far less interesting subjects than that which I have had the honour to relate to you.' As my captain thinks he might figure in a tragedy, he will do so, will the gentleman, I'll answer for it; but my mind must be free of all worries. Don't you think this dinner was amusing?"

'It might have been for Your Majesty.'

"Will it have been for M. Guichard?"

'I doubt it, Sire.'

"Why do you doubt it?"

As I was very pleased to take this opportunity of letting the King know that such jests would pain me extremely, if he should ever wish to play them on me, I replied:

'But, Sire, if M. Guichard has taken it into his head that he will never enjoy the esteem of Your Majesty, since you banter him in this way, I doubt

whether he can have thought the dinner very amusing. If it is a good fortune, and the greatest good fortune possible, to deserve the esteem of a prince whom you serve out of attachment, it is the height of misfortune not to be able to obtain this esteem, when you have done everything to make yourself worthy of it.'

The King listened to me quietly and kindly, did not answer, and changed the subject, by saying to me :

"Apropos" (which it scarcely was), "do you know that the enemy left behind for us at Neisse 100,000 bombs, grenades and cannon-balls, with all the tools for a siege, and that his deserters are coming in to us continually ? This is something ; but I have much more important things to do. Reports tell me that Daun has marched towards Dresden with all his army, so that I shall fly with all speed with mine to succour that town, in case misfortune happens. To-morrow, we shall go to Schweidnitz. Good evening, sleep well. If you see Guichard, he will doubtless tell you the story of the amusing dinner he had."

In fact, he did tell it to me, inveighing a great deal against His Majesty, who on this occasion, he said, as on almost all others, singularly abused the privileges of royalty.

'He will be punished for it. Is this the way to treat an honest man who behaves so uprightly ? Why the devil did I come here ?'

I repeated to him on this occasion all that I had

said to him at Grüssau and on our first march. He promised me not to lend himself any more to such bantering.<sup>1</sup>

‘I did not wish to see anybody except you, and I ask you for something to eat. I am famishing. What a perfidious trick to play me!’

This 9th  
November,  
at Schweid-  
nitz.

At daybreak, we started for Schweidnitz. The cold was very keen during the march; the King was affected by it, and was obliged, immediately on his arrival, to go to bed. I was called in the afternoon. I found him in a fever; his face was all inflamed, as if it were about to catch alight.

“I am not at all well. Feel my pulse.”

His pulse was galloping at a great rate, and his head, he told me, was all clogged.

“This is a fever which attacks me very unseasonably; but I am going to lead it a devil of a dance. I shall reduce it by hunger; I shall eat nothing and shall inundate myself with tea: that is my panacea. As I am pretty well up in medicine, I shall cure myself. I was not well yesterday when I went to bed; the cold which I experienced during the march increased the discomfort I felt. M. Guichard will say that heaven is punishing me for the trick I played him; but heaven takes very little notice of him or me, and is very little concerned whether we dine or not. As I have to speak to Zastrow<sup>2</sup> about several

<sup>1</sup> He hardly kept his word; the banterings continued; they even became more serious, and he drew the greater part of them on himself.

<sup>2</sup> Commandant of Schweidnitz.

arrangements which must be made, I have sent for him this moment. This Zastrow is very fond of prophecies and prophets. He will doubtless speak to me of those he has consulted. I shall hear some very wonderful things, or rather some very stupid ones. How can any one predict the future! I do not know even what will happen to-morrow, this evening, even, with my slight fever. Good evening and good night. You will know to-morrow what the lying prophets have given forth. At three o'clock then."

On entering at three o'clock, I saw immediately, from his still very inflamed face, that the King was not yet well. He did not leave me the time to ask for news of his health. He spoke to me at once of his commandant.

This 10th  
November,  
1758, at  
Schweidnitz,  
day of rest.

"If I had been capable yesterday of being amused, Zastrow would have amused me like a king. You have no idea, my dear sir, of the wretched things he regaled me with. He has seen no less than five prophets of the plain and mountains; he prefers the latter, whom he thinks more inspired than the others. All of them divined, calculated the misfortunes which have happened to me, the loss of the battle, the overwhelming loss I have suffered in my affectionate and worthy sister. They saw in their calculations that the end of my campaign would be brilliant, and would repair all the evils I have suffered; but these imbeciles will not cure the aching of my heart. 'How, Zastrow, can you have any faith in such

rubbish? Don't you see that these animals foretell after the thing has happened? You have intelligence, and you allow yourself to be misled by rogues who desire to filch your money away from you!—'I only give them some, Sire, when they are correct. They foretell after the thing has happened, but, Sire, all that I have had the honour of relating to you was said to me in May and July.'—Finally, my dear Zastrow swore to me by all his gods that these people did not impose on him, that they did calculate the future, and that they had other means to consult about this future; people who have been long dead, who, surrendering to their magic and their invocations or evocations, showed them as in a picture all future happenings. My Zastrow is so infatuated with the power of his prophets that in truth it is pitiable. I did everything possible to bring him to reason, but will imbecility ever come back to it! I call imbecility that inclination to believe in spells, in prophets and even in dreams. How can we believe in such things, when everything in nature tells us that the present moment knows nothing of that which is to follow it? This future which, for the happiness of men, is enveloped in a thick cloud, can it be unfolded by calculations, by evocations the cheat of which shows everywhere, and by all the ridiculous monkey-tricks of those fools who exalt their souls and evoke those of others who are no more? Woe to the private individuals, woe especially to princes, who allow themselves to be duped by



such lying notions. At bottom, the prophets are after the money of both ; they try to get them in leading strings, and then do as they please with them."

The King had spoken a great deal, and too much even. I saw by his look and the tone of his voice that his fever had increased. He perceived it too, and I had to feel his pulse, which was beating with an extreme rapidity and strength.

"I shall lie down and take a powder. Have the kindness to return for a moment at six o'clock."

At this hour, I found the King more normal. He showed me his hands all covered with red spots :

"I noticed this since you went away."

'I think, Sire, that this is a good sign. You should go to bed, and take some tea ; the heat will drive out what there is still to come out.'

"It must all come out without that, my dear sir, I haven't the time to coddle myself. Tomorrow, willy-nilly, my old figure must be on horseback early in the morning. I have no time to lose. I must hurry in my Don Quixotic way to counter what is being planned in Saxony against the wandering knight."

I took it into my head to tell him that he should do this march on the morrow in a carriage.

"In a carriage, my friend, what are you thinking of ? Do you take me for an old woman ? And what would my army say if they saw the fine gentleman wrapped up and buried in his carriage ?

What sort of an example should I set to many officers who need to be saved from bad examples, and who, carried away by mine, would coddle themselves for the least thing?"

'The army, knowing Your Majesty to be unwell, would praise the care you are taking of yourself.'

"You are mistaken, sir: first, it must not perceive that I am ill, and, secondly, I should be deluged with the sarcasms with which the poor miller who with his son was leading their ass to the fair was treated."

'If that happened, Sire, you might also say, with La Fontaine :

Il en fit à sa guise, et il fit bien.<sup>1</sup>

If Your Majesty were well, I should not dream of advising a carriage.'

"No, no, my dear sir, you will not persuade me. I do not allow myself to be led, no, sir, I do not allow myself to be led by anybody."

I should have liked him to stop here, because I saw that he was becoming heated, but at this talk of being led, I felt that I ought to say a word, and this word brought on a new conversation which was singular enough.

'I think of leading Your Majesty! Sire, I have never thought of leading anybody, and least of all Your Majesty.'

"Why should you not think of doing so, for all

<sup>1</sup> ['He did as he pleased, and did well.']

those who surround a prince tend to lead him more or less, some in one way, and others in another. If they once succeed, then they lead my prince at a great rate. Then it is no longer he, but those who lead him who act, and the consequences sooner or later are fatal both for the prince himself and for those to whom he owes himself. I saw early in life, my dear sir, the fatal consequences of this ; the history of all nations and all times shouted them in my ear ; and I made up my mind that nobody should lead me. To carry out the plan I made for myself and never to depart from it, I perceived that it was necessary for me to acquire knowledge, and I did so. I perceived that I must profit by my time, and acquire the happy habit of work, and I have proved that I have this habit, that I can see for myself, that I like to see for myself, that I make it a pleasure and a duty to investigate everything for myself. No, my dear sir, no, neither you nor anybody else will lead me."

I smiled at these words.

"What are you laughing at ?"

'Sire, I am laughing at your thinking that I had or could have the notion of leading you.'

As the King seemed to me to smile, I added :

'I think, however, that it is all the easier to lead a prince who claims that this is very difficult or impossible. Having such pretensions, he is often not on his guard, and is attacked and taken on a side which he did not imagine could be attacked.'

“Your reflection is not bad, but what you say only happens to fools who do not know how to be on their guard, and to be so without letting it be noticed. For the rest, do not go imagining that with my fixed plan of never allowing myself to be led, I reject any good advice that may be given to me. No, I listen to what is put before me; if this is better than I had thought out myself, I confess it frankly, and I let it be known that I surrender to the good reasons put before me, which I can discuss, and not to the person. *Concludo*, that neither Catt, if he had the desire, nor anybody else will lead me, and that both he and I should go to bed. To-morrow, march! not in a carriage, but like a squire in search of great adventures.”

In going out, I met at the bottom of the stairs M. de Zastrow, who had come to inquire about the health of the King. I told him that the King had a very bad rash, that I had pointed out to him that he would not do ill if he went on in a carriage, since the mornings were so fresh, and that, on this advice, which was dictated by the interest I took in his health, he had given me a very fine lecture, and had assured me that he would not let himself be led by whomever it might be.

‘I said the same thing to him as you did, sir, and he answered me in the same way. Do you take me, he added, for an old w——? I fear that to-morrow’s march may do him a great deal of harm, and that he may be a victim of his obstinacy, or perhaps rather of his spirit of contradiction, for

if you and I had said to him that the movement of the horse would do him good, perhaps he would have decided to go in a carriage.'

'I doubt it, Commandant, but, for the rest, you know the King better than I do. I am still very new here.'

'Do I know him! He sent for me yesterday; after having given orders for certain arrangements which had to be carried out, he spoke to me at length about what he calls my prophets. He wanted to know what they thought of his situation. I told him; and he laughed at them and at me, and, although he laughed, he kept returning to them, and to what I believed of their prophecies. I told him, and it seemed to me that he swallowed the pill well enough, when it was a little gilded.'

The King, informed of the enemy's designs on Dresden, Torgau, and Wittenberg, continued his march with an astonishing rapidity. Although ill, he was on his horse at daybreak and at the head of the advance-guard. The cold was extreme; the Margrave Charles, whom I had the honour of meeting on the march, complained very much of the cold, and commiserated more still with the King who, in his present state, ran the risk of serious illness. His Majesty, on arriving at Rohnstock, was obliged to go to bed; his fever was high; his rash had gone inwards; and his head was so clogged that he could not, he said to me, attend to the least thing. I implored him again

This 11th  
November,  
at Rohn-  
stock.

to go on in a carriage, if he marched on the morrow.

“I shall march, but I shall not go in a carriage, certainly not. I have ordered some tea; I shall sweat; and to-morrow you will see me like anybody else. It is true that the cold was very violent this morning. I have never felt the like. But at the present moment there can be no question of my coddling myself. I must do everything I can to make good my loss of the 14th. Up to the present, things are not going badly. If what remains to be done comes off well, it will be the best remedy to cure both my rash and my fever.”

This 12th  
November,  
at Schönau.

Without being, as he had said, just like anybody else, the King was, however, better than the night before; the rash had reappeared. On arriving at Schönau, he went to bed, sweated much, and started off on the 13th for Löwenberg, where he stayed.

13th Novem-  
ber, at  
Löwenberg.

“I am now quite well. I only needed a little rest for my old machine. It has had this, and it is now ready to make haste. To-morrow my brother Henry will rejoin me at Lauban. This will be a holiday for me. I shall rest for a day, and thence, without stopping, I shall make for Dresden, unless my enemy fortune plays me one of its tricks. As the devil is not always at the door of a poor man, I hope that this fortune will not shut the gate of Dresden on me.”

This 14th  
November,  
at Lauban.

15th Novem-  
ber.

He read to me on the 14th and 15th at Lauban the funeral oration on Turenne by Fléchier. He

recited whole pages of it from memory, telling me to follow him with the book, to see whether he missed anything. He repeated twice the passage in which the orator describes an army, and that other in which he says : ‘ Already was taking flight, to raise himself to the mountains, that eagle which at first had frightened our provinces.’

The King marched to Görlitz, and crossed the Neisse. He found a large entrenched work on the hills on this side of the town. The enemy had made it to defend the roads to Lauban. They abandoned it immediately they had news of the return of the King.

This 16th  
November,  
at Görlitz.

During these three days, His Majesty did nothing in the evening except read the funeral orations of Fléchier.

This 17th  
November,  
at Maltitz.

“ This reading brings back to me the loss I have suffered in my affectionate sister who is no more. All that recalls her to my memory interests me. If you wish to give me pleasure, speak of her often to me.”

This 18th  
November,  
at Bautzen.

He shed tears while he said this.

“ On the march from Maltitz to here, I inspected my camp at Hochkirchen. I stopped there some time to examine the ground thoroughly. I reflected on all that had happened, and on all that might have been done on that melancholy day. These reflections, by which I shall profit, you may be certain, made me very gloomy, and this gloom increased when I thought of all the brave men who lost their lives on that fatal spot. I had pointed

out to me the place where Marshal Keith lost his life, and where his sad remains were buried. I ordered his aide-de-camp, de Cocceji, to have them transported to Berlin, to be interred there with all honour. If I am happy enough ever to see that town again, I will have a statue raised to the worthy Marshal, which shall be erected in Wilhelm square. Remind me at Dresden to write a letter to my Lord Marischal : what a blow it must have been for him ! ”

I saw indeed that this passing through Hochkirchen had recalled to him a host of melancholy ideas ; and these lasted for a long time afterwards.

This 19th  
November,  
at Pulsnitz.

I was called early in the afternoon of our arrival at Pulsnitz.

“ To-morrow, we shall be at Dresden. I am going there with my brother Henry and the eight battalions which he has brought to my aid. The great Marshal had the kindness to strike his camp at Nostitz on the night of the 15th to the 16th, to retire to Giesshübel, and to send the cavalry back to Bohemia. There are all my enemies gone to the devil then, and this is the effect of my prayer : *Daigne, daigne, mon Dieu, sur Kaunitz et sur elle.* O Daun, it is not a surprise, it is not the thousands of men who have bit the dust, it is not the standards taken, a camp made bloody and abandoned, which make for victory. See, Fabius, see, what are the consequences of your exploits. I flew, hiding from you my movements, to the aid



of Neisse, of which I raised the siege. I flew with more rapidity still to the aid of Dresden, to beg you to go away from it, and you granted my prayers. Zweibrücken, your friend, your famous Haddick, have abandoned Leipzig and Torgau, and all together you have put me in possession once again of that Saxony which I had at the beginning of my labours. Be blessed among men! But banter apart, my dear sir, it seems to me that I have not at all badly made amends for that accursed surprise; we must not plume ourselves too much, however. Heaven loves to humiliate boasting. We must be modest, for who knows yet what we shall have to suffer. I am ready for everything; my box is still with me. Before using it, I shall spare neither pains, labour, nor my life, you may be assured."

If the King, during the three weeks that he remained at Dresden, rested a little from the extreme fatigues of this campaign, he enjoyed very little of that peace of mind which is so necessary to recuperate the forces of the body exhausted by so many labours. When I saw him, he was always gloomy, always fretting over his sister, the Margravine of Baireuth, always uneasy about future contingencies, in which he saw no end to his troubles.

This 20th  
November,  
1758, at  
Dresden.

The evening of his arrival, he sent for me at five o'clock.

"You see me, my dear sir, sometimes in the huts of the poor, sometimes in the palaces of

kings : in which is one the happier ? Alas, it is not here :

Pour moi qui d'un poids équitable  
 Ai pesé des faibles mortels  
 Et les biens et les maux réels,  
 Qui sait qu'un bonheur véritable  
 Ne dépendit jamais des lieux,  
 Que le palais le plus pompeux  
 Souvent renferme un misérable,  
 Et qu'un désert peut être aimable  
 Pour quiconque peut être heureux."<sup>1</sup>

I saw that his eyes were wet with tears when he recited these last two lines.

"To refresh ourselves a little, I will read *Athalie* to you."

At the end of the first act, he stopped.

"I can't sit on these royal chairs. They are or they seem to me so high that they make me giddy. I think each moment that I am falling to the right or left."

He sent for the low chair which he used while on campaign.

"Men in general and my royal brothers and myself in particular are great fools to go to so much trouble in the matter of uncomfortable furniture. My chair is worth all these fine arm-chairs, and it only costs me three crowns."

He continued his reading, and after having finished the play, "I should say," he said, "that

<sup>1</sup> Gresset, *La Chartreuse*. ['For myself, who with just scales have weighed weak mortals and real blessings and evils, who know that true happiness never depended on places, that the most pompous palace often conceals a wretched man, and that a desert can be agreeable to any one who can be happy.']

never before has a tragedy been read in these rooms. When my great brother (the King of Poland) returns here, he would be very much astonished if these walls repeated the tragedy which I have just read, those which I propose to read, and the verses I will learn. Do you know how my dear great brother amuses himself? He sends for his jesters, gives one of them two good clouts, and the other a kick in the hind quarters. They cry out: 'Oh, oh, that hurts.' Then my great brother bursts into laughter, and quite out of breath with the clouts and the kicks he has given, he dismisses his gentle jesters, very pleased with himself. Those who wish to govern the country are very careful, as may easily be understood, to keep my very dear brother constantly amused in this noble fashion. The worthy minister has intelligence and ability. I do not know whether he has read much, or whether he has paid more attention to his library than to his wardrobe; but I know that his collection of books is immense. Our people have somewhat diminished the number, and this is not as it should be, although the Count <sup>1</sup> has done and still seeks to do me all possible harm. I do not favour these pilferings. God knows into whose hands this fine library will have fallen."

I remained this first day until eight o'clock.

The King only went out once during his stay at Dresden. Here is a short account of the life he led there and of his occupations. Having risen

<sup>1</sup> [Brühl.]

very early, he despatched his military business, and, after having attended to it, he employed himself in touching up the account he had written of the battle of Hochkirchen. He filled three notebooks on this war, which he was good enough to read to me, as well as a foreword for the war of '42, of which he corrected various passages.

“I wrote this foreword,” he said, “in '46 for the history of my first campaigns. I tried to do my best, and to set aside, while writing, all spirit of prejudice. You will see, if we ever return to Potsdam, that I wrote with that interesting impartiality which an historian should never lose sight of. I began, as you saw in my three notebooks, to follow this rule, and I shall never depart from it henceforward, if time and the ability to compose are left to me. I am growing old, my dear sir; my strength is beginning to leave me, and I feel that my soul is losing some of its energy. How can I do well what I should like to do well, and which may, if it is good, be of use to my successor? It is for him alone, my dear sir, that I write. He will see the reasons behind my actions, the mistakes I made, which I do not disguise and excuse least of all, and the means I used to repair them. He will also find those of my enemies, and how they were able to remedy them. I speak of them frankly. I also do justice to them where they showed ability; I state it with the candour which those of their own party might use. I point out sometimes how they might have taken greater

advantage of their victories and successes against me. You easily perceive, my dear sir, by what I have just told you that my memoirs written and to be written concerning the profession to which I am condemned by a harsh fate, are meant for him alone who will succeed me, for those of my family to whom it pleases him to show them, and for the few officers whom he may choose for special training. I hope that when they read me, my successor and my family will be pleased with me a little, and that, in virtue of my intentions, which were pure and altogether patriotic, they will pass over the mistakes I have made, and will have some gratitude for my labours. That is all I had in view in composing these memoirs which are destined for the archives, whence they will be taken for the use of the country."

This language affected me by its tone of so natural modesty, which sits so well on really great men, and which even adds to their greatness, and by that tender affection which he constantly showed for his family. There were always several persons at his dinners in Dresden, which were quickly over. Immediately after this meal, he sat down to work. He composed a piece containing his reflections on several changes to be introduced into the methods of making war.

"I intend, my dear sir, this little *moorsel*, to imitate d'Argens' manner of speaking, for my friend Fouqué. As soon as I arrive in Breslau, my first care will be to touch it up. When it is passable,

I will send it to him, and ask him for his observations. I do not think he will find this fruit of my last campaign altogether bad, and he will see in it several good points on the choice of camps, on the precautions to be taken while on the march, and on the dispositions to be made on a day of battle. The art of war has its elements and fixed principles. The theory of it must be acquired, and firmly fixed in the mind; without this theory, you will never go far. This used not to be the way of thinking. It used to be imagined that the theory of the profession of arms was useless, at the least; I say at the least, for there were some who raved to the extent of believing that it was more harmful than useful; this doubtless was the height of ineptitude. But in these times, everything has changed about; every one is convinced that a clear and deep knowledge of the theory of the profession is indispensable if you hope for successes worth having, and that war is a study and peace an exercise.

“ If my enemies were to read my *moorsel*,<sup>1</sup> they might profit by it at my expense. Do you think I am good-natured enough to let them have it ? ”

‘ No, Sire, I do not think that you are so good-natured; but your own officers might profit by this work.’

“ If General Fouqué passes it on to them, he may, if he takes his precautions, and if he chooses well

<sup>1</sup> The enemy, when they captured Glatz and General Fouqué's papers, found this *moorsel*, which they had printed.

those who desire to instruct themselves and to get on.”

His Majesty, after having written from dinner-time to half-past five, ordered me to come to him at six o'clock. Usually, I remained until ten, and during this time he would read a tragedy and a funeral oration by Fléchier or by Bossuet. Reading one day that on the Prince de Condé, in which is this passage :

‘With that prodigious comprehension of all the details and of the universal plan of the war, he is seen attentive always to what occurs, and draws from a deserter, a runaway, a prisoner, a passer-by, what he wishes to say, what he wishes to keep silent, what he knows and, so to speak, what he does not know. So sure is he in his conclusions that his patrols report to him everything down to the slightest things. He is awakened at any moment, for he also held it as a maxim that a clever captain may well be vanquished, but that it is not permitted to him to be surprised. Therefore do we owe him this praise, that he never was surprised; at whatever hour and from whatever quarter his enemies came, they always found him on his guard, always ready to spring upon them and to take his advantage.’

The King, I say, reading this passage without interruption, stopped at the words, ‘take his

advantage,' re-read the whole passage in a low voice, then read it aloud, and, when he reached these words : *a clever captain may well be vanquished, but it is not permitted to him to be surprised—*

“ Ah, my friend,” he said, “ that is true ; but let us pass it over ; yet, it was not altogether my fault at Hochkirchen. However that may be, it is an unfortunate stone in my garden.”

On the day after that on which he read this funeral oration, he read it again, acknowledging that a captain should not be surprised, but making his little observations, as he called them, which he did not do before, and jibing at the orator, who makes the great Condé speak in this fashion : *I doubt less than ever the mysteries of religion ; these truths, he continued with a ravishing gentleness* (“ see my animal of a priest ”), *unfold and become clearer in my mind ; yes, we shall see God as he is, face to face, facie ad faciem.* “ Could Condé have talked like this ? This ravishing gentleness ! how fine and smooth it is. This passage mars the whole thing, in which by the bye there are some beauties. Don't you think that Monsieur de Condom<sup>1</sup> drivels in making a prince drivel in this way ? ”

‘ Monsieur Bossuet relates a fact, Sire. All those who have written about this prince have represented him as being religious. They say that he often spoke of religion, and in a tone of conviction that left no doubt regarding his principles.’

<sup>1</sup> [Bossuet.]



“But did he know Latin, and could this *facie ad faciem* have been said by him?”

‘I do not know whether the Prince knew Latin or not, but the orator quotes the Latin passage which the great Condé perhaps said in French.’

“But do you not believe him when he declares that his dying man repeated in Latin, and—admire these words—with a marvellous taste? Repeated Latin words with a marvellous taste, is not that the height of ridicule and of theological pedantry? *Ecoque bonus dormitat Bossuetus.*”<sup>1</sup>

On the last evening which the King passed at Dresden, he read the epistle he had written for the Margravine; he was very much affected, and expressed his sorrow to me.

“Would you believe that, with the idea of giving myself a little distraction, I had a fancy to go and see my poor Potsdam. This fancy came from a heart full of bitterness, which is often unaware of what it does or does not desire. A moment’s reflection restored me to my normal self. I felt that it was not Potsdam which I should see, but Breslau, where our winter quarters will be. How sad they will be for me! I start to-morrow; you can follow with my aides-de-camp. As for myself, I am going alone with my cares and my melancholy. ‘Sorrow mounts behind and gallops with him,’ what infernal company, my dear sir! *Bon voyage.* Arrive safely in port.”

The King arrived on the 14th in Breslau. His

<sup>1</sup> I write down this Latin just as he pronounced it.

suite, which could make no such despatch, did not arrive until the 16th. As soon as His Majesty had learned by the report that I had arrived, he ordered me to come at six o'clock ; but an inflammation of the lungs which I had taken on the road, and which increased on my arrival, prevented me from going out, and forced me to remain in my quarters until the 2nd January. The King had the kindness to send his surgeon, Schlau, twice a day to inquire what I was doing. He wrote to me three days after my arrival :

“I have done a great deal of work since I have been here. My piece addressed to Fouqué has already been revised and corrected, and I am now busy with my good Lord Marischal and his brother. I must have sad subjects ; they alone suit me. Look after yourself.”

The whole army then entered its winter quarters. The troops commanded by Prince Henry occupied a chain of posts in the circle of mountains from Plauen and Reichenbach to Pirna. The cavalry which the King had taken with him on the 18th, when he marched to Dresden, remained along the Elster and part of it in Lower Lusatia. General Wedell took up his quarters with his corps in the principalities of Anhalt and in the state of Reuss. General Zieten commanded in the mountains of Silesia, where he set up a chain of posts. General Fouqué remained in the neighbourhood of Leob-

schütz and covered Upper Silesia. The other troops were stationed about the country. Colberg, Cosel, Neisse, Dresden, Torgau and Leipzig delivered as quickly as they were besieged, even the Sonnenstein abandoned by the enemy, the King remaining master of Silesia, Saxony, and Pomerania : such was the end of a campaign in which the King, as in those which had preceded it, showed to an astonished Europe all the resources of a superior genius, an unshakable firmness, and an activity which transcends the imagination.

My hand is too feeble to describe the operations of the King and to fix the praise they deserve. I can only admire them.

These marches, these camps, these battles won and lost, and more than all these, the sight of a prince struggling with a multitude of enemies and dangers, ceaselessly occupied, ceaselessly borne away in the variety of affairs of all kinds, raising himself by superiority of reason above everything he did, repairing his misfortunes with an inconceivable ease, profiting by his advantages, ever sensitive to the losses of friendship, combining with all these talents that of being able to interest and to please, condescending to talk with me, often with an encouraging kindness, on every subject that concerned his situation at the moment and the sorrows of his heart, its faults, as well as the caprices of the mind which sometimes showed themselves : all this spectacle, so touching and so new for me, has led me too far, perhaps, in the

account which I have given. I venture to believe that the reader, sympathising with my position, will pardon me if I have related so many happenings and so many things, and if, in the novelty which they had for me, I have thought that they might interest in the measure that they affected me when they passed before me.

## PART THREE

THE life of the King at Breslau during the three months that he remained there was as well filled and as melancholy as it had been in these two respects at Dresden. As all is of interest in such a prince, there will be some pleasure and perhaps some usefulness in knowing how this prince was able to employ every instant, and how many things he brought within the sphere of his mind.

1759, winter  
quarters at  
Breslau.

Rising during the first two months of his stay at six o'clock in the morning, he rose during the last month at five o'clock, and towards the end at four, to accustom himself, he said, and to be prepared in time, when he should begin his campaign. In this way, he prepared himself for everything he desired to do. He nearly always proceeded by imperceptible gradations; he neglected this only in the winter quarters, when he passed from great movement to great rest.

“I feel, my dear sir, that I should not cling to my room, seated in my very convenient and simple armchair; but, after all my worries, repose has for me so many charms that I give way to it with delight. My temperament, which is pretty good, does not suffer from this change, which must seem an extreme one to you. I profit by my

leisure, which is a real occupation. I find utility in this and distraction from my troubles.”

When the King was dressed, he read his despatches, tearing up or throwing into the fire the letters to which he did not wish to reply, and played for a quarter of an hour on his flute, either *solfeggi* which he had noted down for himself, or others which he invented. His cabinet secretaries were next called ; the King dictated to them what they had to reply to each letter dealing with civil or military affairs. There were few replies to make on the first, and he allowed them to take their own course.

“ The military side alone, in these critical moments, should be the object of all my attention. If I am happy enough to end this unfortunate war, I shall then busy myself with all my departments, in order to amend the abuses which may have cropped up, the errors which may have been committed, and the negligences whose multitude I suspect. But what can I do ? I am not left with enough time to attend to and counter everything. I must give myself to the most urgent.”

Having sent off his letters, he composed either in prose or epistles in verse, and this work lasted until eleven o'clock, when he gave the parole. He returned again to his work until dinner-time. The dinner did not last long. He used to invite a few generals and Sir Andrew Mitchell, with whom he talked more than with the others. After the meal, the King played for a quarter of an hour

on the flute, and he played, he used to say, to aid digestion. He then sat down again to his composition of the morning, or he corrected his earlier works and the pieces he had composed during the campaign. I will speak in what follows of his compositions during this hibernation and of the works he read. I was called at five o'clock and remained until seven. During this sitting of two hours, the King spoke to me of his morning and afternoon's work, and afterwards read to me some funeral orations or from some philosophical works, which gave rise to observations, and sometimes to disputes. The rules of the dispute were not often too well observed, and although I was permitted an entire liberty, he permitted himself a greater, which sometimes annihilated that which he had the kindness to permit; or he would not define the terms, or he would say that the definitions were bad, when they showed a contradiction into which he would fall in arguing as he did, or, finally, he cut the discussion short by saying that you were wrong; and yet, on another occasion and on the same matters, he put forward as judicious and logical what he had condemned as being pure sophistries. I have already shown, at the beginning of these memoirs, this method of arguing which royalty permitted itself. He then seemed gratified to have the pleasure of instructing me, and of bringing me round to logical arguments; and I was careful not to spoil this pleasure, which enabled me to follow in all its ramifications the turn

of this singular and superior mind. One day he said to me :

“ If I had lived in the times of those ancient sophists, I might like them have disputed for and against every proposition, and I should have stood no jesting ; I should have shouted like an ogre, when arguments failed me.”

As I smiled at what he said, he asked me why I was smiling, and, without awaiting my reply, he said to me :

“ You think perhaps that I should have been a despot in literature ? ”

‘ I do not say that, Sire, but I think that, in your disputes with obstinate sophists, you would have had the same pleasure in annihilating these gentlemen as you would take in annihilating your enemies.’

“ *Distinguo*, as regards the degree of the pleasure, the first with respect to the second is infinitely little. M. d’Alembert would have made of this a fine algebraical formula for us, in which you and I would not have understood the slightest thing.”

At seven o’clock the King would play until half-past eight a concerto and several solos by Quantz, or those he had composed himself, and of these he had, he told me, composed one hundred and twenty.

“ Is not that creditable for a poor King musician ? ”

During the first weeks, he made me remain at his concerts, but when later there were parties and



suppers in town, he desired that I should take advantage of them, and I heard his concerts no more until the last fortnight of his stay. After his concert, he read alone until ten o'clock, and went to bed. During the last month, he went to bed at nine o'clock, to accustom himself to going to bed earlier still during the campaign. Such exactly was his manner of life, and his literary occupations were as follows.

After having revised, as I have said, his reflections on the military art, which were intended for General Fouqué, the King corrected his epistle to the Margravine of Baireuth. This correction took three days. He read me each evening his corrected epistle, and always shed tears while doing so.

“My heart is so full that I cannot express all the feelings it holds, and this distresses me.”

He next corrected his epistle to his sister Amelia, *On Chance*, and that to Duke Ferdinand which he had sketched out during the campaign.

The King had almost finished the correction of this last piece, when he received from Hamburg a letter from Marquis d'Argens, who sent him his warmest congratulations on the campaign which His Majesty had just finished so happily. Here is the King's reply to this letter.<sup>1</sup>

As His Majesty, against his ordinary custom, interrupted the correction of his piece to write and send off this letter, I have transcribed it here.

<sup>1</sup> [Not given in the German edition, presumably because the letter is to be found in the King's Collected Works.]

As for the other letters which he wrote to different persons during these winter quarters, I will give an account of them together at the end of our stay at Breslau.

When the King had corrected all his little pieces, to make himself worthy, he said, of the suffrage of the patriarch of literature and of the god of verse, he composed an epistle in verse to my Lord Marischal and one to Sir Andrew Mitchell. These two epistles were sent without any correction.

“I want these two honest people to have immediately what I think about them. When I have a little more time, I will revise these two pieces. Oh, I hope that, because of the true attachment which I have for them, they will pass over what may be defective in these compositions, which no doubt bear the marks of my present position.”

In sending off the epistle to my Lord Marischal, he reiterated to him all his regrets at the loss of the worthy Marshal, his brother. When he had finished making verses, he started to work in prose. He wrote a dissertation on the satirists and on lampoons. I saw immediately, when he read me these pieces, that the conversation which he had heard between his aide-de-camp de M(arwitz) and one of his friends<sup>1</sup> had given him the idea of writing them, and what he told me, after having read them, confirmed me in my judgment.

“Most men decide on what they see without

<sup>1</sup> I have already related this. See Doberschütz after the battle of Hochkirchen.

knowing what they are talking about, or they judge by prejudice which clogs their understanding, and when bitterness or resentment is added, they jumble everything. You may have remarked how inclined they are in my army to criticise everything, and what is pitiable is that scamps who have seen nothing, and heard nothing, with intelligence, are the boldest in deciding the value or lack of it in the operations which take place beneath their eyes, and of which they certainly do not perceive the wherefore. It is of them and of a crowd of others still that can be said: they have eyes and they see not, ears and they hear not. I should very much like, my dear sir, to be able to cure my scamps and others who do not think that they are so of this mania for criticising everything, a mania which retards progress in all directions. How can you progress when you think you are clever enough to condemn everything that is done? I should like to be able to engrave in their heavy brains this very true maxim: criticism is easy and art is difficult."

Seeing the King one day with a more tranquil expression than usual, I said to him:

'Why, Sire, all this serious reading which you have been doing for so long will certainly make you devout. These funeral orations, these sermons, these holy tragedies announce an approaching conversion.'

He did not reply, looked at me fixedly, but with a smile, and spoke to me of indifferent things.

Six days afterwards, he came up to me when I entered his apartment; he had a paper in his hand, which he kept behind his back.

“ You asked me, sir, why I did so much serious reading.” Presenting the paper to me which he held : “ See and judge.”

It was a funeral oration which he had written on Matthew Reinhart, master shoemaker.

“ That, my dear sir, is the fruit of the readings which astonished you. Bossuet and Fléchier made funeral orations to celebrate the life and death of illustrious heads. As for me, not worthy to untie the latchet of the shoes of these great preachers—I have written the funeral praise of a poor shoemaker, who by his abilities, his virtue and his piety was more deserving than kings and princes to pass to the most distant posterity. Flattery, that unworthy flattery of which it is impossible to rid yourself when you speak of these ‘ illustrious ingrates,’ has not soiled my pen in composing the praise of my shoemaker. I have depicted him with truth, a worthy man, all the greater for his real virtues, which he owed only to himself. Now, sir, are you pleased, and do you think that my gloomy readings were useless to me ? ”

At the end of four days, the King came towards me, having, like the first time, his hands behind his back.

“ When you saw me so attached to my preachers, you seemed to me to fear that I might become devout. Alas, sir, your fears were but too well

founded ; I am devout according to all the rules. Read this title ; that is the subject on which I have just been working."

It was a sermon on the Last Judgment.

"Do not think, sir" (he kept up the sir), "that my devotion dates from this present moment. A few months after the battle of Kolin, I had composed the half of my edifying piece. Since then, carried away by the diversity and multitude of my affairs, I thought no more of my sermon, lukewarmness having again come upon me ; and now, returned to the better path, I have finished it for your edification. When you fear to be carried away by the torrent of bad examples, alas ! the flesh is so weak, read my sermon. Accept these last efforts of a voice which is known to you,<sup>1</sup> these last words of a dying voice, and a vanishing ardour."

He terminated his compositions by this sermon on the Last Judgment, which he corrected several times.

"As the matter is serious," he said, "I have written it on black-edged paper."

His conversations, during his stay at Breslau, were usually serious and sad. I seldom saw him give way to a little gaiety. Hardly a day passed on which he did not speak to me of his sister's death. He often re-read the epistle he had composed for her. In reading it, he seized on everything which might have some relation to

<sup>1</sup> Imitation of the end of Bossuet's oration for the great Condé.

the immateriality and the immortality of the soul, and he argued about it as he had done previously. One evening, he was speaking on this subject which he seemed to have so much at heart that he always spoke with great warmth about it, and his little favourite dog which he had sent for from Potsdam kept jumping at him.

“Down, Frolic, finish your jumps and your caresses. Why will you interrupt a philosopher who is arguing on such serious things?”

As he often answered with verses the reasons which I brought forward on the subject which formed the object of our dispute, I myself one day used the same method, when he asked me why I did not see that our soul, depending constantly on the body, finished with it, and why this idea of destruction could seem an unwelcome one to me. I replied to his question :

Nos chagrins, nos regrets, nos pertes sont sans nombre,  
 Le passé n'est pour nous qu'un triste souvenir,  
 Le présent est affreux, s'il n'est point d'avenir,  
 Si la nuit du tombeau détruit l'être qui pense ;  
 Un jour tout sera bien, voilà notre espérance.<sup>1</sup>

I expected a reply after his own fashion on the lines I quoted to him, but, to my great surprise, he said :

“As you quote Voltaire's lines so well, I also will recite you some which will comfort you :

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<sup>1</sup> [‘Our sorrows, our regrets, our losses are numberless ; the past is for us but a sad memory ; the present is dreadful, if there is no future, if the night of the tomb destroys the thinking being. One day, all will be well, that is our hope.’]

Aveugle que j'étais, je crus voir la nature,  
 Je marchai dans la nuit, conduit par Epicure,  
 J'adorai comme un dieu ce mortel orgueilleux,  
 Qui fit la guerre au ciel et détrôna les dieux ;  
 L'âme ne me parut qu'une faible étincelle  
 Que l'instant du trépas dissipe dans les airs :  
 Tu m'as vaincu, je cède, et l'âme est immortelle,  
 Aussi bien que ton nom, mes écrits, et les vers."<sup>1</sup>

I seemed to remark, on many occasions, that the King often combated what he was inclined to believe, what, at the bottom, he desired should be or might be. He returned too frequently and on the slightest pretext to this idea of immortality for it to have been altogether indifferent to him and for him to have had fixed ideas on the subject. In moments of satisfaction and success, the night of the tomb destroyed the thinking being;<sup>2</sup> in moments of disaster, of losses and of the death of people who were dear to him, this night had no sway over his thought.

“Perhaps one day I shall see again my sister, my brother, and especially my mother, whom I loved so much. What a pleasure it would be for me if I could talk with those great men of antiquity whom I have admired so much and whose works I have read. If the soul depends so narrowly on

<sup>1</sup> Lucretius: see the *Temple du goût*, by Voltaire. [‘Blind that I was, I thought I saw nature. I walked in night, led by Epicurus; I worshipped like a god this proud mortal, who made war on heaven and dethroned the gods; the soul appeared to me but a feeble spark, which the moment of death dispersed in the air. You conquered me, I yield, and the soul is immortal, as well as your name, my writings, and verses (or worms).’]

<sup>2</sup> He sometimes opposed with some acrimony the arguments which were brought forward to combat this idea,

the body, if it sinks when the latter totters, we yet see sometimes; at the moment when the machine is about to break apart, that what thinks in us takes on a new energy, that there are often moments more luminous than in the greatest vigour of the body. At any rate, if we do not admit a providence which directs all life's happenings towards an end worthy of a consummate wisdom, and which seems to have made us for happiness, everything in nature is inexplicable."

Such were the ideas that he put before me in moments of reverse. How many times has he quoted these lines to me, when he felt himself weighed down with work, or with a sorrow that made it impossible for him to do anything :

Est-ce là cet esprit survivant à nous-mêmes ?  
 Il naît avec nos sens, croît, s'affaiblit comme eux,  
 Hélas, périrait-il de même ?  
 Je ne sais, mais j'ose espérer.<sup>1</sup>

He added this last line, when he spoke to me, while correcting his epistle to the Margravine, of the exquisite pleasure it would be to him to see her again. His readings during his stay corresponded with the fundamental sadness which held him in its grip. He twice read the funeral orations of Bossuet and Fléchier, once those of Mascaron and La Rue, Saurin's sermon : 'What shall I do for thee, Ephraim, what shall I do for thee, Judah ? Behold thy piety is like the dew of the morning and

<sup>1</sup> Voltaire to M. de Genonville. [‘Is this that spirit which survives us? It is born with our senses, grows, weakens like them; alas, must it die the same? I do not know, but I dare to hope so.’]



like the dawn which fades away'; the *Petit Carême* of Massillon, the tragedies *Esther* and *Athalie*, the *Tusculan Questions*, which he read again, as well as the *Nature of the Gods* and *De finibus*. He finished these readings with the first six volumes of Plutarch's *Lives* of illustrious men.

The King, towards the end of his stay, made two journeys: he went to confer with Prince Henry, with whom he appointed a place of meeting, to communicate to him his plan for the campaign he was about to enter on, and, in going and returning, he learned by heart the whole of the *Chartreuse*, which he recited to me on his return. I had the book in my hand, which he had given me to follow him, and to stop him if he should miss anything. This happened once only.

"You see that I did not lose my time; this *Chartreuse* pleases me by the natural philosophic tone which reigns in it."

During the second journey, which the King made to visit several posts, he also learned by heart several scenes from *Iphigénie*, and, in reciting them to me, like the first time, he did not miss a word.

I finish what concerns our winter quarters at Breslau by transcribing the letters which the King wrote there, and the epistles which he composed on his arrival for my Lord Marischal and Sir Andrew Mitchell. Although His Majesty corrected these two pieces a great deal, I have thought that the reader would like to see the sketches, each one of

which was written in an afternoon, and at a moment when the King was still fatigued with the labours of the campaign.

The King replied to Count Algarotti, who praised him highly on the fine campaign which he had just finished.

It will be remembered that His Majesty wrote from Tombsen, on the 2nd November, to Voltaire, and begged him to bring all his forces to bear on the raising of a monument in honour of his sister, the Margravine of Baireuth. The author of the *Henriade* sent an ode. The King criticised several strophes which he thought were feeble, and he sent his criticism to Voltaire.<sup>1</sup>

It seemed to me that the King was not so very indifferent to what M. de Voltaire wrote to him about the history of Brandenburg and to the bulletin attached to the letter. It said in this bulletin that it was known for certain that M. de Voltaire, and not the King, had written this history, and that His Majesty's only part in it was that he had furnished materials drawn from the archives. Voltaire was very indignant over the insolence of this bulletin, and was more exuberant still in his assurances that he had made it hot for those who had written this impertinence, and who were very well known to him: 'I have disavowed and I will always disavow this imposture'—that is what he

<sup>1</sup> The King had sent him a sketch a month before, but not the piece finished on the eve of the battle of Hochkirchen; the one which he sent to Voltaire was the piece duly corrected. [The letters and verses mentioned in these paragraphs are not given in the German edition.]

said on a separate sheet of the letter, and this is what the King said to me :

“ You see what Voltaire writes to me ; you see how he assures me of the indignation which this bulletin caused him, and of the trouble he has taken to silence the calumny ; well, my dear sir, you take all that for good money, and you are much abused. You may be certain that the rogue himself wrote the bulletin which he sends me ; no one except him could say such a disgraceful thing. You do not know all the blackness of his character. He is pretending to be obliging ; he wants me to forget all the complaints I have against him, and, to succeed, he invents something to inform me that he will refute it, that he is the most zealous of men for what he calls my literary glory. Finally, he wants me to thank him, and to be infinitely obliged to him for the vengeance of rogues like him who utter such absurdities. Without pointing out to him that I suspected him of being himself the author of this libel, I contented myself, as you read, with simply saying to him that I was quite indifferent regarding what might be said about me in France and elsewhere. I am convinced that when he reads my letter, he will say : ‘ This — does not seem to be touched by it all ; I have gained nothing by my malice. Ah, how I wish he would receive a nice little buffet, how I should laugh to the skies.’ That is Voltaire, my dear sir, just as he is ; you may be assured that I am not mistaken.”

‘You fondle him then, Sire,’ I said, ‘as we flatter the devil, so that he may not do us all the harm that he would and could do.’

“*Bene, sir, bene.*”

Two days before the departure of the King, I received a letter from an actor, who, having fought a duel with one of his colleagues whom he wounded, had been condemned to the fortress of Spandau. He entreated me to read to His Majesty his letter and the verses he had attached to it :

Tant d'ennemis par son bras abattus,  
Voudra-t-il mériter que l'univers le fronde,  
S'il condamne les gens pour s'être un peu battu,  
Lui qui bat si bien tout le monde ? <sup>1</sup>

I read the letter and the verses.

“Although Mr. Actor is not altogether correct in his verses—witness the Hochkirchen affair—I shall not be particular about that, and will order his release. Is it not ridiculous that such people should fight duels ? ”

The actor was set free, admonished, and threatened that he would finish his days in Spandau, if he attempted to fight a duel again.

If the different occupations of the King during this winter season are recapitulated, who will not be struck with astonishment at so well filled a life, who will refuse the admiration and the just praise which he deserves !

<sup>1</sup> [‘So many enemies struck down by his arm, does he wish to deserve the raillery of the world, if he condemns people for having fought a little, he who beats everybody so well ?’ (Play on words, *battre*, to beat, *se battre*, to fight.)]

“The habit of work,” he said, “which is so fortunate and so useful a possession to all men, is especially precious to princes, who owe to their subjects the well-regulated employment of all their moments. Everything becomes easy to them, when they like work, and this love of work is the safeguard of their morals, as it is of those whom they govern by the good example which they set.”

On the day before our departure, I stayed longer than usual. He ended where he had begun ; he spoke all the time of his sister, the Margravine, and of never-ending regrets.

“I have done everything to allay my grief a little ; I have read and written, as you have seen, like a Benedictine, and my grief is still the same. I am now going to run after great adventures, and to the sorrow which I feel they will add new sorrows—and the people talk of being as happy as a king. I start to-morrow for Rohnstock, where we shall billet for a few days. Our campaign will not begin so early, because this time I shall not be the aggressor, unless a favourable opportunity presents itself ; then, I shall certainly seize it. The Austrian gentlemen who think that I love nothing but fighting will be mistaken this time, and I will show them in this campaign that if the great Fabius has a pound of lead in his breeches, I have two on each buttock. That in two words is my plan of campaign. Good evening. Pray earnestly, my dear sir, that it may be favourable to me.”

This 24th  
March, 1759,  
at Rohn-  
stock.

The King started at early morning, and arrived at Rohnstock with several battalions, which billeted there.

His humour was not very smiling on the first day of his arrival. He had given several orders which had been badly carried out; he spoke of them to me in a tone which showed me how much he must have been annoyed.

“It must be acknowledged that I often have to deal with funny people. Listen, there are some whom I have to employ who, if I made them go out of my room, would not know in which direction north is, and others who believe with the utmost facility all the silly stories which have been told them to frighten them.”

This first day's humour lasted all the time of our stay at Rohnstock; those who had business to transact or favours to ask were all trembling with fear. The Prince of B(runswick), a Major-General, however, did not fear to beg the King to advance him, since it was his turn. His Majesty replied to him that he must be patient, and that he would have the rank of Lieutenant-General which he desired. After having waited several days, he wrote again, and he received the same reply. The King then wrote a letter in which he gave orders for a patent of Lieutenant-General to be sent to him, and he left this letter on the table. His plan no doubt was to try the Prince, and to use him to patience; but the Prince, who was absent, wrote for his discharge—and he obtained it.

The King, who spoke to me of these letters which he had received, of the replies to them he had made, and of his letter asking for the patent to be sent, said coldly :

“ This is what will happen to all those who press me. I will not be forced to do a thing, because I like doing it at the time it should be done ; I want my favours to be free. When it seems to be that something is being demanded within a certain time, because the one who is asking imagines that he deserves it, I do not give way easily. If the Prince had had the goodness to wait a few days, I should have had that of fulfilling his desires. I acknowledge that he is a good subject, but nobody is going to dictate the law to me in whatever manner it may be. Where should I be and what would have become of me, if I always granted everything directly it is asked of me ? I have my rules from which I do not depart, and I find they suit me excellently.”

The army regretted this prince, and much more so when it learned that with a little more patience, he would have been advanced. This example stopped several requests of the same kind which certain officers had intended to make.

During this stay at Rohnstock, the King read the *Commentaries of Cæsar*, the *History of the Empire* in two volumes by Voltaire, and three volumes of his universal history ; he corrected the epistle to the Lord Marischal, and an instruction for the Major-Generals of cavalry, which he sent to General Fouqué.

I received while we were in these billets a letter which contained these lines, to be placed beneath the portrait of the King :

Sage et vaillant Monarque et père,  
 Il sut vaincre et penser, il sut régner et plaire ;  
 Héros dans ses malheurs, prompt à les réparer,  
 Au plus affreux orage opposant son génie,  
 Il vit l'Europe réunie,  
 Pour le combattre et l'admirer. <sup>1</sup>

There was written in large characters underneath these lines : *Portrait of His Prussian Majesty, Justice and Justness.* I read my letter.

“ People think too well of me,” he said. “ What is very true in what has been written to you is that Europe is in fact united to crush me. If I deserved its admiration, as is said, would it be so busy crushing me ! This genius which is so gratuitously ascribed to me would serve, if I had it, merely to put off my destruction. That is what these good people, who are perhaps touched at seeing me struggling against all the world, do not and cannot know ; but, my friend, I have two resources for all possible cases, my box, or a little of my old luck.”

1st April,  
 1759, at  
 Bolkenhayn,  
 the army  
 billeted in  
 the neigh-  
 bourhood.

We marched this day to Bolkenhayn ; the King remained there until the 12th. During this stay he read the *Logic* of Port-Royal, Racine's *Phèdre* and *Andromaque*, *Vert-vert*, the *Lutrin*, and Gresset's

<sup>1</sup> [‘ Wise and valiant Monarch and father, he could vanquish and think, he could reign and please ; hero in his misfortunes, prompt to retrieve them, opposing his genius to the most frightful storm, he saw Europe united in fighting and admiring him. ’]



*Epistle to my Sister.* When reading these latter pieces, he sometimes gave me the book and recited, so that I might see whether his memory was still ready and faithful.

His conversation each evening turned on rather sad subjects, the misfortunes he had suffered from his tender youth upwards, and the greatest misfortune of all, the loss of his sister, the Margravine. While speaking to me of her and of the epistle he had composed for her, he acknowledged to me that he had sketched it out in prose and not in verse, a page of it a few weeks after the unfortunate affair at Kolin, and that he had not looked at it again until the moment when he learned that his sister was ill, when he went on with it in verse. He gave me this first attempt of his, to remind me, he said, of his occupations at the time he wrote it. I will give later on these two beginnings, so that it may be seen how he found time to exercise his poetic vein even in such times of stress.

“ I do not know, my dear sir, how I shall come out of all this. Who would not be frightened at seeing the number of enemies I have on my track and all the forces they are gathering together ! But this is not a moment for astonishment ; we must act, disperse them. The diabolical part of my position is that, in order not to succumb, I am forced to be always undertaking difficult, uncertain and even very hazardous enterprises, and how can I expect any success, when I must

constantly have dealings with this holy father, Chance, who for a long time past, like an arrant coquette, has so cruelly abandoned me, after all the allurements he has set before me. In order to bear up a little, to have a few months' rest and to act freely with my army, according to my own little ideas, I have thought out a plan which should bring about all these things, if it is well carried out. I will tell you about it to-morrow."

He did not tell me about it on the morrow, as he had said, but a few days afterwards.

"The large number of enemies which you see I have on my hands, the forces which they are gathering together on all sides, their plan of attacking me at the moment when the season will permit of it, all this gave me the idea of acting in Upper Silesia, and of destroying, if the thing is possible, their magazines at Troppau and Hof, and of performing the same operation in Bohemia and in Poland. With a little luck, my dear sir, I shall have some rest for some time, and I shall be able to turn against Marshal Daun or the Russians in security. You see the difficulty of my position: I am always forced by a combination of circumstances to resort to expedients which at other times would not be those which I should choose for preference. Without these hazardous measures to which I am reduced, I shall succumb before the end of the campaign. To-morrow I shall march to Landshut in order to deceive the large corps which I have opposite me."

The King marched to Landshut with the whole <sup>12th April,</sup> of the army ; the cavalry camped there, and a part <sup>at Landshut.</sup> of the infantry was billeted there.

On the first day of his arrival, he was in a singularly gay mood. This gaiety caused me a great deal of joy ; it was a real suffering to me to see the King given up for six months to a melancholy which made me fear for his health.

“ I breathe at last, my dear sir ; I breathe. All will go well ; Prince Ferdinand is making progress ; my brother Henry will certainly do well in Bohemia ; my friend Fouqué will carry out cleverly the plan which I have drawn up for him ; and your servant will support with all his power the operations which are about to be performed, and, to this effect, he is about to give the enemy every possible alarm ; he is certainly not expecting all that is going to happen to him.”

‘ I accept the augury, Sire. It is time this life which you call a dog of a life came to an end.’

“ A little luck, my dear sir, a little luck : if all goes well, I shall have a little more elbow-room. If my plan does not succeed, things will become more serious and more difficult. But they are bringing me a letter ; let us see what it is. By heavens, a letter from Voltaire—what a lucky day ! Now, sir, listen.”

Voltaire in this letter praised very much the short pieces in verse and prose which the King had sent to him.

“ You must acknowledge, my dear sir, that this

Voltaire writes like the angels. In order to have soon another letter from this unique man, I will reply now to him ; wait a moment, it will soon be done."

And in fact it was done very promptly. The King returned to Voltaire a portion of the incense which the latter had given him, and assured him that he might write what he pleased, without having to fear the curiosity of the Austrian hussars, who were greedier of brandy than of fine verses ; and on my saying that they had burned at Paris several of Voltaire's works, the King added to his letter this postscript :

"They say that they have burned at Paris your poem on *Natural Religion*, the *Philosophy of Good Sense*, and the *Mind*, a work by Helvetius. Admire how self-esteem flatters itself : I look upon it as a kind of honour that at the time France is making war on me it should make war on good sense."

The correspondence of the King with the patriarch of Ferney was, during this stay at Lands-hut, both pretty frequent and sometimes rather lively. I will give a sample of it, which will show what Voltaire said in his letters :

"I congratulate you," the King wrote to him in his letter of the 19th, "on your still being gentleman-in-ordinary to the Well-Beloved. It will not be his patent which will

immortalise you. You will owe your immortality only to the *Henriade*, to *l'Œdipe*, to *Brutus*, to *Sémiramis*, to *Méropé*, to the *Comte de Foix*. That is what will make your reputation, so long as there are men on this earth who cultivate letters, so long as there are persons of taste and lovers of the divine talent which you possess. As for myself, I forgive, for the sake of your genius, all the annoyances you caused me at Berlin, all the lampoons at Leipzig, and all the things you have said or have had printed against me, which are exceedingly severe and very numerous, without bearing you the least ill-will for them. It would not annoy me even, if I heard that your Swiss-French lordship had supplied auxiliaries to the brigands who are trying to plunder me. This is putting you quite at your ease with me."

The King, after having read to me this letter, of which I quote only a part, read Voltaire's letter again, and the one the patriarch had written to me.

"You will see, my dear sir," he said, "and remember that I said so, this b—— is ready to play me again some of his tricks. He will have printed those accursed verses which I sent to him. I will send him a word on the subject."

He added to his letter this postscript :

"*P.S.*—If the verses which I sent to you appear, I shall accuse none but you. Your letter is a forerunner on the fine use you will

make of them, and what you have written to Catt does not satisfy me. However, the whole thing troubles me very little."

The King had sent to Voltaire an epistle which he had written for Princess Amelia; this epistle was very much praised, and, in spite of this praise, His Majesty, in the reply which he sent on the 22nd, spoke of his piece as a sketch.

The day following the sending off of this reply, the King received a new letter from Voltaire, who sent him *Candide*.

"This Voltaire is admirable to think of me and with his letters and works to feed my mind, which has great need of good nourishment. If this man's heart only corresponded to his fine genius, what a man, my dear sir! He would obscure everything that exists. You see that he thinks my verses rather good, seeing that they were composed in such difficult situations, but, in spite of this praise of so great a poet, we must be modest. I have read a part of his *Candide* this morning already and the ode on the death of my dear sister; he has corrected it and embellished it supremely well. Here is the reply which I have sent to him. You see that I am a very exact correspondent, but in this way I shall soon have another letter from my patriarch. All that comes to me from him is very dear to me, especially in these moments when I have need of every possible distraction."

It was in this way, writing to Voltaire and more frequently to his friend Fouqué, that His Majesty passed his time at Landshut until the 27th. He read there the introduction to philosophy by s'Gravesande, and the preface to the *Dictionnaire Encyclopédique*.

“This is d’Alembert’s masterpiece,” he said; “this work alone will make his name immortal.”

*Candide*, which he read three times, amused him a good deal. “That is the only novel you can read and re-read.”

All would have been well, if General Fouqué had taken those military stores which the King had set his heart on. The General wrote that he could not find any, and the King replied that they were there and very considerable even, and counted so much on them that he exhorted the General—which was easily said—to have them carried to Neisse. The King was as much satisfied with Prince Henry’s expedition into Bohemia as he was ill-satisfied with what was happening in Silesia. He sent for me when he received the news of Linay, on the 17th.

“My brother has just carried out a fine operation; he has destroyed some large military stores, burned all the boats which the enemy had on the Elbe, taken standards, flags, guns, General Renard, 50 officers and 2000 men. Finally, he has driven off all of the enemy he could find. He will now march on Bamberg, and I am certain he will thoroughly thrash the troops of the Circles.”

The King was exceedingly delighted with this news which he had just received. He spoke to me with the greatest praise of his brother and his military talents.

“If those whose duty it is to support me acted as well as he, I should have more elbow-room, my dear sir, and I should breathe a little more freely, which is very necessary to me. My brother by this operation of his has so upset the projects of the Pope’s elect that the latter has sent General Harsch with all speed to Leitmeritz.

Landshut,  
26th April.

“To-morrow, I start for Neisse. As the operations of my brother have put Daun on the defensive, I want to take advantage of the opportunity to fall on de Ville. If he is not warned of my march, I shall rap his knuckles smartly. My march will be rather rapid, so I am leaving you here, commending myself to your earnest prayers. Think now and then of poor Don Quixote; you see he does not spare himself. Pray especially for some fortunate event which will bring about that so much desired peace; but how far we are still from that happy moment! On the 12th or the 13th May, I expect to be back here; I cannot say positively, for I depend on circumstances. Good-bye, good night, and do not forget me—I repeat—in your humble prayers.”

The King did set out on the following day at early morning for Schweidnitz, and, through Reichenbach, Nimptsch, Münsterberg, he marched on the 28th to Neisse. He advanced on the



3rd May, with a part of his corps, in the direction of the Austrian frontier to Zuckmantel, and seeing that there was little to be done, he returned on the 12th May to Landshut by the road which he had taken in setting out, and the army encamped in the neighbourhood. He set up his headquarters at Reichhennersdorf.

The King sent for me on the day of his arrival ; the audience was not long ; he seemed to me very fatigued and ill-pleased with the result of his march. 12th May, at Landshut and Reichhennersdorf.

“ I have done nothing worth mentioning, my dear sir. We took a few mangy prisoners, and that is all. Either the enemy is warned of my marches by these accursed priests who give him news, or he retreats when I advance on him, or my plans are badly carried out. By what means can something be done ? Do you know ? ”

‘ No, Sire ; if these means escape Your Majesty, how should I discover them ? ’

“ This borders on the courtier somewhat, sir.”

‘ In that case, Sire, the courtier speaks the strict truth.’

“ Do you know, I am fit for nothing to-day, and you will be unable to get from me anything rational. I therefore bid you good-bye, pointing out to you that, if you prayed for me, as I asked you to do, you prayed with small earnestness, or you are not yet altogether the just man of the Gospel.”

‘ Why, Sire, should I not have prayed earnestly ; you were the subject of my prayers ! I am not

the just man, doubtless ; perhaps I shall become so in the camps.’

“The camps, my dear sir, scarcely make just men. It was not in them that I acquired that sense of justice on which I venture to plume myself a little, in spite of my heterodoxy, which sometimes makes you sigh because you wish me well. You may be assured that I am very orthodox in morals, and it is morals which make just men. But good evening ; we will leave this chapter for our next meeting.”

13th May.

I was called on this day at four o’clock. There was no question, during this sitting, which lasted several hours, either of justice or orthodoxy in morals, but of the Queen of Hungary and of Count de Kaunitz.

“This queen has done me much harm,” he said, “and caused me to pass some bad moments.”

‘I imagine, Sire, that you have returned the like to her.’

“Not so much, my dear sir, as I should have wished. In spite of all the harm she has done me, I must acknowledge that this princess is very respectable on the score of her morals, which are pure. There are very few women who are her equals in this respect. Most of them are strumpets, and the queen abhors strumpets, whom she is very careful to have shut up in prison, especially when she suspects them of being after her beloved spouse. She is very industrious, and has abilities in more than one direction. I cannot deny her this justice,

any more than I can deny that Kaunitz has a clever head and is a very great politician; none of our politicians of to-day approaches him. Any one who saw Kaunitz at his toilet would not suspect him of being so clever, and so pre-eminently clever. You see from this example, my dear sir, that you must never judge men lightly, and decide lightly on their capabilities. That is an important point which I very seldom overlook. Often, when weighing men, which is my particular study, I learn to know them thoroughly through mere trifles. I see into them by means of the slightest things, which escape those who have no capacity for observation, and who only see in these slight things trifles which mean nothing."

His Majesty carried his reflections rather far. I could not very well reconcile them with the observation which I had had pretty frequent occasion to make that His Majesty sometimes saw men not as they were really, but as he had taken it into his head to see them both as regards their characters and their abilities. What I observed afterwards quite confirmed me in my opinion. Out of a crowd of instances which make this incontestable, I will only relate this one :

"There is a man," he said to me, "who has great abilities; he only lacks the opportunity to display them. He has an intelligence that always goes straight to the point combined with that fire which is necessary for great things. What he sees,

he sees thoroughly well ; I shall therefore enable him to distinguish himself."

When this man had been given the opportunity to show his worth, his intelligence, his activity, his just and penetrating views disappeared ; the man was no longer anything more than a fool and an idler, who never did anything of any value.

The King made it his pleasure and his duty even to instruct several young officers. He used to choose those whom he imagined were fittest to profit by his instruction.

"Among my pupils, I have two or three whom nature seems to have formed expressly to be one day marshals of my armies. They grasp all my ideas with an astonishing rapidity ; they anticipate them sometimes, and sometimes go beyond them."

My surprise was not small when, after some time, he told me that these fine fellows were fools who would never be any good for anything.

While we were quartered at Reichhennersdorf, I had several proofs of what I advance ; I had one especially in General de W(edell) whom the King praised continually.

"He is a great man," he often said to me. "You will see what he will do in this campaign. I shall employ him in all the important affairs."

Never have I seen the King pay so much attention and respect to any one as he did to this general. This went so far that he often waited for him before sitting down to table, and thus sacrificed to him his pleasure and the punctuality of being there

precisely at mid-day. When the general, who often went reconnoitring, kept him waiting too long, the King had him served apart, and kept him company.

“ I sent for you a little late, because I waited for Wedell, who went out reconnoitring. He is a great man of whom I expect very great services. He is continually on his horse seeing what is going on.”

This wonderful idea which he had formed did not hold out, as will be seen, against a misfortune which this general suffered in losing a battle. All his abilities were then annihilated ; he was no longer anything more than a very ordinary man.

Each time I saw His Majesty giving way to his personal bias about anybody, and praise him beyond anything I might be able to say, each time I have seen him forced to go back on his word, and to acknowledge—this but seldom—that he had been very thoughtless when he had judged the man important at the first glance.

The Marquis d’Argens had indeed told me on my arrival at Breslau : ‘ If, while playing the flute, the King says so and says it to others that you are intelligent, you will be so, whatever you do or say. If he says the contrary, you will be without intelligence for the rest of your life.’ There was sometimes some truth in the Marquis’s judgment, but it is certain from what I have just said that the King could retract.

Those who knew His Majesty and this weakness for judging men thoughtlessly as regards their

natural abilities, their acquired abilities, and also their hearts, took advantage of this weakness to suggest skilfully that, if they knew or were worth anything, they owed to him this good fortune, which continually encouraged their gratitude and their zeal. Woe to him who dared to dispute the ability and the honesty of these people.

During this and the following months which we passed at Reichhennersdorf, where I was called every day, His Majesty was very busy with his correspondence with General Fouqué, of whom he often spoke to me.

Sometimes, the enemy seemed to wish to come to blows with General Fouqué; at others, his different corps had to fly into the mountains without striking a blow. Sometimes His Majesty thought that a decisive engagement was at hand, and that Marshal Daun was disposed to force our position; at others, this Marshal had not yet assembled his grenadiers into corps, and seemed to be about to make towards Lusatia. One day, the enemy was to besiege Glatz; the next, no such thing.

Thus His Majesty went on each day sending to Marshal Fouqué his ideas and his plans for every event, should the enemy wish to attack him, or should his design be to attack the General. He informed him also of the march of the Russians and of their plans to invade his States.

“As the consecrated man,”<sup>1</sup> he sometimes said,

<sup>1</sup> [Marshal Daun.]

“does not grasp the design I have of remaining on the defensive, I will make him lose time in combinations with General Fermor, and this will be so much time gained.”

While quartered at Reichhennersdorf, the King read the eulogium of the Academicians by Fontenelle, the *Pluralité des Mondes* and his *Oracles*, the *Sethos*, and Voltaire's *Candide* four times. This novel often furnished an occasion for speaking of this best of worlds, and of moral good and evil.

“The latter outweighs the other in my present position. Who will say that I am as happy as I am unhappy? For my part, I say with feeling that there is no happiness for me.”

When I represented to His Majesty that in order to argue with as little fallacy as possible on the question whether there was more unhappiness than happiness in this world for any particular person, the whole life of this person must be considered, and not a particular point of this life, he replied :

“Who is able to take this into consideration, and how especially can it be done when you are suffering? I have had some pleasures in this world, I acknowledge, but all these pleasures are destroyed by the evils which I have experienced for so great a number of years.”

Then he gave me a detailed account of his life, sighing all the time, and, while gliding lightly over the moments of satisfaction which he had enjoyed, he dwelt on the unpleasantnesses of his existence,

During this stay, His Majesty wrote three letters to Voltaire. He had charged him to sound Dr. Tronchin on the question whether he would make the journey to Prussia to see Prince Ferdinand and to advise him in his illness. Voltaire, who probably had not spoken to the doctor, replied to His Majesty that this famous doctor could not make this journey, since he had the care of the health of the children of the royal house of France. The King was extremely annoyed by this letter, and replied to it in a moment of anger. On my saying that the letter was very strong, that Voltaire might get huffed and make bad use of it, he changed it, and thanked me for my suggestion.

In the King's conversations during the long stay at Reichhennersdorf, he harped continually on his sister, the Margravine of Baireuth. When he had been speaking for some time of her, often shedding tears, he used to read me the verses he had composed for her, and his tears would flow again. I sought to keep him away from these melancholy ideas. At first, I did not succeed; but, having started him on the subject of his battles, he came round, and at different times gave me a short account of them.

“It seems to me,” he said, “that in this war there have been some very singular things. Never has there been fought a battle more famous and bloodier than the one I fought at Prague. I lost considerably there; the Austrians immensely. My aim was not to attack the Austrians; Marshal



de Schwerin, a very brave, very clever man, but too hasty, forced me in some way to attack the enemy in this formidable position; but we had no opportunity to listen to reason; we had to act, and did indeed act. My brothers Henry and Ferdinand did marvels; our victory would have been more complete, if the impassable roads had not retarded the march of Prince Maurice, who consequently was unable to fall on the rear of the flying enemy."

From the story of this battle, the King passed on to that of the battle of Kolin. This is what he told me :

"I have been blamed, I know, for having given this battle, which was not necessary, it was thought. This was the opinion of the Prince of Bevern, but I was sure of beating them, and I should infallibly have beaten them, if my dispositions had been followed, and if several of my generals had not lost their heads. The battlefield was ours. A squadron of enemy cavalry was also there; the adjutant who was bringing the order to retreat was killed. This squadron, seeing that it was being left in peace, sent word to Marshal Daun, who had run away, that the battle was won. Fresh troops were advanced, and we retired. If I had succeeded, as I should have done, after having rendered the Austrians incapable of undertaking anything further, my plan was to march to the Rhine, attack the French, and pass into France: but enemy fortune did not will it thus."

This is what I learned from trustworthy persons about this sad affair at Kolin.

The King, on joining the Prince of Bevern, asked him whether they should or not attack Marshal Daun. "Speak frankly to me and as a friend."—"Sire, in responding to the confidence which you show me, I have the honour to tell you with that true interest which I have for you that a battle is not necessary. You have won one; you will soon have Prince Charles with all his garrison. There is no hurry therefore; let Daun attack us. Besides, Your Majesty has very few troops, and Daun has at least 70,000 men.' At this moment, Prince Maurice arrived with reinforcements; the King told him the Prince of Bevern's opinion, insisting especially on his argument that they had few troops. Then Prince Maurice cried: 'Sire, where you are there are 50,000 men; we must attack the enemy.' They marched; the ground was so ill-known that they arrived at some ponds which they could not pass, and had to turn back. The left wing was sent forward to turn the Austrians, and it was then eleven o'clock. The heat was extreme; the troops were allowed to rest until two o'clock, exposed to the sun's ardour, which tired them all the more. Then an attack was made, and all went well at the beginning. The King, who was in the attic of a house near the spot where the attack began, and who had Colonel de Balbi with him, noticed a great empty space in the background. He sent an engineer named Steuss to reconnoitre

this space. The engineer reported that there was absolutely nothing behind it. Balbi replied, 'Take care, sir, of what you are saying; your report is not accurate.' The King became annoyed with Balbi, and ordered him to go to the devil with the engineer. However, he saw that enemy troops were advancing in this opening, and that they were separating his army. At this sight, he descended, mounted his horse, and retired.

The King, uncertain for several weeks about what the Marshal would or would not do, seeking to amuse himself with gossip which he spread, often deceived by false reports made to him by peasants, traders, and some officers, had at last had for several days the assurance that the enemy would make a march, and would not be long in beginning his operations. 1st July,  
1759.

"This consecrated hat <sup>1</sup> has combined his plan with the manœuvres which the Russians are to perform; this combination will be a pure loss of time. I am certain that Dohna will break up the Russian corps which is at Nakel, and will give me a good account of the others: 'this oracle is more sure than that of Calchas.'<sup>2</sup> In a few days, I shall be able to confirm the good news to you."

Thus did the King flatter himself; in the position in which he was, the least little advantage

<sup>1</sup> [Marshal Daun; the Pope had sent him a consecrated hat and sword. There is possibly some play on words between 'toque,' hat or cap, and 'toqué,' crazy.]

<sup>2</sup> [Racine, *Iphigénie*, iii. 7.]

was in his eyes an important affair. A few prisoners taken by General Wedell caused more joy to the King than I can describe

“Does not this Wedell,” he said, “deserve all my affection and all my esteem! He always does well what he has to do, and often more than I have reason to hope.”

He read me this evening Voltaire's ode on the death of the Margravine of Baireuth. When he read the strophe where he speaks of noon, ‘I do not,’ I said, ‘grasp the thought of the author.’

“Oh, I should think not. He is alluding here to Maupertuis; but I did not wish to let the rogue know that I had remarked what he wished me to remark.”

On this occasion, he spoke at length of the poet's malicious character; he dressed him down thoroughly.

“Would you have believed,” he said, “that I should have remained here quiet so long?”

‘No, Sire.’

“The enemy did not believe it either. They do not know me well yet; they imagine that I cannot remain quiet, that I must always be attacking; but I can keep on the defensive when it is necessary, as I can economise when that is necessary. For a whole month I have not fired the sunset gun; thus I have saved thirty rounds. But do not go and imagine that I trouble about saving when it is not necessary. I can spend as well as anybody else when the need demands.”

I was not called on these two days. A violent colic caused by a pie deprived me of this advantage. The King suffered a great deal, promised himself to indulge his taste for pies no more, and forgot his promise when the colic had passed.

2nd, 3rd  
July, 1759.

I was called at three o'clock; the audience was rather long.

4th July,  
1759.

“I have suffered very much these two days,” he said, “and at this moment I am unaware how I could have got so frightful a colic, which completely knocked me over.”

‘They say, Sire, that a pie of which Your Majesty ate caused this colic.’

“Those who say so are fools. How can a mere mouthful of pie give the colic? My stomach is not so ill-bred as to make me suffer for trifles. But it is no longer a question of colic; there are many other things to torment me.

“We start to-morrow: the great hat<sup>1</sup> has been on the march for some days in the direction of Marklissa. You may expect shortly a serious affair.

“If I come off well of all this, you will not see me trust blindly to fortune, and I shall not puff myself out with my successes. I shall always think that our small amount of prudence and wisdom becomes in a moment the plaything of chance and fate, which takes a pleasure in humiliating the pride of the presumptuous. This

<sup>1</sup> [Daun.]

way of thinking will henceforward be mine ; do you think it a good one ? ”

‘ Very good, Sire.’

“ Have you ever found me neglect it sometimes, for you ought to know me pretty well by now ? ”

‘ I think, Sire, that often human wisdom and prudence are the plaything of chance, as you said.’

“ Ah, sir, you are not replying directly to my question. I ask you whether you have ever seen me plume myself too much on my successes.”

‘ No, Sire, but I have often seen you too pleased with them.’

“ *Bene, bene, dignus est in nostro corpore qui so bene parlat*, but it is time to finish. Molière says that, when you have to perform a difficult march, you should go to bed early on the day before the march. On this, I wish you good evening. To-morrow in the suburbs of Hirschberg.”

The King marched this day at early morning with the army in two columns to Hirschberg. The first column marched through Pfaffendorf, Schmiedeberg and Lomnitz ; the second went by way of Schreibersdorf, Fischbach, Rohrlach, Eichberg and Hartau. His Majesty set up his quarters in the suburb of Hirschberg called the Six-towns. I was called at five o’clock. A moment after my arrival, a packet was brought in. His Majesty eagerly opened it himself. As soon as he saw its contents, he gave it to me, and the tears I saw flowing surprised me.

“ The Marquis d’Adhémar,” he said, “ attached

5th July,  
1759.

to the service of my poor sister of Baireuth, sends me the panegyric he has written on the dear deceased. Keep this panegyric for yourself; do not let me see it."

His tears were then flowing freely.

"Why must I have lost my dearly beloved sister amidst all my misfortunes! She alone helped me to bear them; she consoled me; she encouraged me; she made me hope for those moments when I could see her again in more prosperous times. I have lost everything in her; my dear sir, there are, believe me, princes who know the worth of faithful friendship; they are not all these 'illustrious ingrates.'"

He next spoke to me of his affection for the late Queen, his mother, and of her astonishing kindnesses towards him.

"These are two beings whose memory will always be infinitely dear to me; it will finish only with my life."

Thus passed this melancholy sitting.

"The panegyric which I have received," he said, "makes me incapable of anything. I do not wish to keep you any longer. Why should I make you sad by talking to you any longer of my sorrows? Good evening."

We marched on the following day to Waltersdorf. 6th July. I was not called; but, on the day after, a day of rest, I was called at four o'clock.

"Yesterday, I was fit for nothing. The whole 7th July. day a violent headache turned me into something

like an imbecile. If this life lasts much longer, I do not know how I shall carry through with it. I am getting old, and already I feel the infirmities of age advancing; but I shall hold fast, and will do all I can; you cannot expect more."

In His Majesty's moments of anxiety, he very frequently spoke to me of the King, his father. I saw how much these past scenes had affected his quick and sensitive soul.

"From my tender youth, my life until this moment has been a chain of evils. For a few pleasures, I have experienced a thousand pains, and even amid the pleasures which I enjoy, the image of my father rises up before me to weaken them. How severe he was to me! You can form no idea of it, my dear sir, although I have often spoken to you about it. In spite of all the causes for complaint I have, I have not ceased to venerate him, and I have done his good qualities the justice they deserved. He sometimes gave proof of an astonishing kindness; you would have said that he had the most sensitive soul possible. Here is an incident which will surprise you. He had reason to complain of one of his adjutants, to whom he did not speak for a week. One day, he sent for his councillor, Eichel, ordered him to go to a room, to which he had the adjutant sent. The King came, and, advancing towards the aide-de-camp: 'You have been at fault,' he said to him, 'I have very good grounds for complaint against you. Do not justify yourself; for a week I have not spoken



to you ; I cannot stand it any longer ; I pardon you. Do better another time.’ And he slapped him on the shoulder. Turning then to his councillor : ‘ I sent for you to come here,’ he said, ‘ so that you might be a witness of my conduct.’ The adjutant wept a good deal, confessed that he had been at fault ; and from that moment did not give the slightest ground for complaint. One day, while walking, my father knocked against a girl whom he pushed so roughly that she fell. At first, he started laughing ; next, annoyed with himself, he said to one of those who were with him, ‘ I was wrong to laugh ; the girl was perhaps hurt ; let her be given thirty crowns.’ He sometimes acknowledged his faults, and this happened to him once on a singular occasion : it was this. My father sent orders to his secretaries and councillors, Eichel and Schumacher, to come immediately to the palace. ‘ I have sent for you,’ he said to them, ‘ for such and such important affair which demands the closest secrecy. Take great care ; if anything is divulged, devil take the one who has spoken : it will be one of us three.’ And he dismissed them. Three days afterwards, M. Eichel, on his way to the palace, heard two grenadiers speaking of this affair. What was his sorrow and surprise ! He acquainted M. Schumacher with the fact, and he, who was as anxious as was M. Eichel, decided to report the matter to the King. ‘ How the devil can the thing have become public ? ’ replied the King in a tone calculated to alarm the poor

councillors. 'We do not know, Sire, but the thing is so. Your Majesty may remember that he has spoken of this affair to some one, for we assure you, by all that we hold sacred, and as we swore to you, that we know nothing of it.' The King pondered a moment, and then cried: 'My friends, be reassured; it is I who am the fool and the one guilty of indiscretion. I spoke about it to Grumbkow without perceiving that these grenadiers were listening to me. Devil take that moment's weakness; such a thing will not happen to me again. You had a fine fright, confess now.'"

These different anecdotes brought the audience to an end: "Good evening; to-morrow we start."

8th July,  
1759, at  
Lähn, head-  
quarters  
Wünschendorf.

The King, in the early morning, marched with the army in two columns to Lähn. The first column took the road through Röhrsdorf, Tschisdorf and Wünschendorf, where the headquarters were set up. The second column went through Berbisdorf, Oberlangenau and Giesshübel: the army encamped on the mountains between Lähn and Mauer.

I went to His Majesty's quarters at three o'clock. Although rather fatigued, he was, however, in a gayer humour than the preceding days. He spoke a great deal of his pleasures at Rheinsberg, and of his endeavours to make this place pleasant to those whom he invited there.

"We were all there like good friends. There was no restraint, and none of that etiquette which kills pleasure. Ah, my dear sir, how many times

do I recall these happy moments of my life ! How we are carried away by events which we cannot foresee into a painful course of action ! I know, my dear sir, I know, but there is no changing it now."

He spoke to me of the battle of Mollwitz :

"I thought I had lost it, and I retired. I could not allow myself to be taken. What a humiliation for the first step I had taken on the path to glory ! And then, too, I had not yet my little box which comforts me so much."

On the subject of this battle, he related to me the following incident. One of Lindstedt's grenadiers, who was rather seriously wounded, retired, and found on the way a riderless horse. He did not think twice about it, but mounted the horse as well as he could, saw that our cavalry was about to attack, followed it, and took a general, whom he brought to a place of safety.

"Struck with the conduct and bravery of this grenadier, which was reported to me, I ordered that he should be well taken care of. When he was completely cured of his wound, I made him an officer, and on the first day of his service in this capacity, he deserted. There is a fair field which I present to your philosophical reflections. But this is not the moment to indulge in them ; we must start to-morrow very early, and we must go to bed now. Good evening."

The King marched at early morning in the direc-<sup>9th July,</sup>  
tion of the camp of Dürings-Vorwerk ; the first<sup>1759.</sup>

column went through Schiefer and Röhrsdorf, the second through Merzdorf and Schmottseiffen. We camped on the mountain between Neudorf and Röhrsdorf. I was not called on this day, but on the following day, I went to His Majesty's quarters at three o'clock; I found him very fatigued. He had just received the news that Marshal Daun intended to send through Lusatia a strong detachment to the help of the Russians.

10th July,  
at Katten-  
Vorwerk,  
commonly  
known as  
Dürings-  
Vorwerk.

“If this happens, I hope that my brother Henry will give a good account of this detachment, and will thrash it well. You must acknowledge that these poor Russians are very much to be pitied; they have only forty or fifty thousand men.”

The King cracked a good many jokes on the timidity of all these people.

“What a pace I should go, my dear sir, if, like Daun, I had a consecrated hat and sword! See what it is to be an infidel; you are cast out by the holy father, and you are consequently exposed to all the reverses of fortune. Do you know any means by which you can quickly become a true believer, and earn by an enlightened belief the benevolence of the man of the seven mountains?”

‘The best means, Sire, for the first moments, are to beat your enemies well. When you have brought them all to reason, the holy father will perhaps send you a consecrated sword, since you were able to make such good a use of your very heretical one.’

“That is not bad,” he said, “for a heretic, I

assure you it is indeed ; but enough—let us leave the good old man in peace, and let us see whether the *Pucelle* of his friend Voltaire will make us laugh more than the gifts of the very holy father.”

He read several cantos, which he thought delightful.

“ It is impossible to have more wit than this fellow. We will have the continuation to-morrow. If this book is not altogether edifying, it enables you to pass a few pleasant moments. Good evening ; take care that the fine things which I have just read to you do not overheat your imagination. There is no overheating to fear for mine ; it is very old, my dear sir, and very chilled. Good evening.”

During these fourteen days, my audiences were rather long. The King read much. He despatched Tacitus, Sallust and Cornelius Nepos, and he talked to me about them in the afternoons. He corrected several pieces of poetry.

At Dürings-  
Vorwerk,  
from the  
11th July,  
1759, to the  
24th in-  
clusive.

“ You see me,” he often said, “ very busy reading and writing. I need this diversion from the sorrowful ideas which throng me. I see the clouds gathering together, and a heavy storm will soon break. God knows where it will work its havoc. I should be a little less anxious if the orders which I give or send were carried out. Lieutenant-Colonel de Lüderitz has committed folly upon folly at his post in Friedland. My Dohna has behaved very badly with the Russians, and has forced me to take away from him the command of

his army, which I have given to my brave Wedell, who will commit no follies. And my good friend Fouqué is not without giving me trouble, since he tells everybody, I don't know why, that the enemy is stronger than he really is ; and even if this were so, is he not aware that our people must not be frightened? Believe me, mine is an accursed task. You can never be happy in any position in life when you have to deal with so many people, and how much less so should you be in my place ? ”

In this way did the King each day at these quarters give expression to his sorrowful complaints.

“ I know,” he said to me one evening, “ that Soltykow is crying out aloud ; that he is clamouring for help, and that a detachment composed of 12,000 men, which Loudon will command, will be sent to him. I hope my brother Henry will give this detachment a good drubbing, and will send it back whence it came.”

This idea enlivened the King very much, and in a little while he was back again in his good humour.

“ The consecrated hat with his great movements will not make me commit follies here, I'll warrant you. I have prepared all my means against everything he may like to undertake, and what makes me easy in my mind, moreover, is the hope of good news from Wedell. I count on learning soon that he has valiantly thrashed the Russians.”

Unfortunately, it was the Russians who thrashed his friend, the general. The King was talking with me on the 24th at three o'clock in the afternoon ;

he was telling me how useful philosophy was in intolerable positions, and in the touching losses of friendship. I was saying to him: 'And I mourn while philosophising on my position and on my losses,' when I saw his aide-de-camp, Bonin, in the distance, advancing with great strides. When he was within sight, I perceived that his hat was pierced in one of its wings.

'Sire, here is your aide-de-camp. His hat has received a bullet; there has certainly been a battle.'

At this word, the King went quite red.

"Where is he, where is he?"

'He is just entering.'

His Majesty opened the door himself:

"Come in. Well, what is it, what has Wedell done?"

'Sire, he has given battle to the Russians, and has lost it. Your aide-de-camp, Wobersnow, is killed.'

"Lost it!" said the King; "and how the devil did he do that? Tell me the truth, the real truth, do you hear?"

'General de Soltykow, to establish his communications with Daun through Crossen, passed General Wedell's left wing, and took up a position near Palzig. M. de Wedell, neglecting to forestall the Russian general, and seeing himself cut off from Crossen and Frankfort, contented himself with bombarding the Russians during their march. He moved, and took up a position along two very

marshy brooks; his centre tried to cross by a very narrow bridge; but the fire of the Russians stopped it. Wishing to recover the road to Crossen and Frankfort, General Wedell directed his principal attack against the right wing of the Russians. Manteuffel with several battalions crossed the brook near Kay, and threw back Soltykow's right wing. Your left wing, Sire, persevered in this fine attack of Manteuffel's, but for lack of space and good positions, and withered by the terrible fire of the Russian artillery, the line remained unsupported, and we were forced to retire to Mohsau.'

"Eh, good God, what follies you are telling me! Is it possible to behave in so unprecedented and inept a fashion! Go and tell M. de Wedell" (it was no longer *my friend Wedell*) "that I will join him immediately. Do not stop on the way; make haste; and don't say a word of all this to those whom you may meet when you go from here."

When the aide-de-camp had gone, the King gave himself up to all the sorrow he felt at the loss of this battle.

"Am I not most unfortunate? Is there such a situation as mine? Attacked by all the world, I have to defend myself alone, and how can I hold out? But tell me, I beg you (looking at his map), is it right to let yourself be cut off from Crossen and Frankfort; is it right to take up a position along an impassable brook, to make your troops march over a narrow bridge, and to expose them thus to a cannonade? All these b—



are losing their heads. You are not much of a soldier; but you certainly would not have committed all these follies. Now I am exposed to the greatest reverses; I am expecting them, and at least they will not surprise me. But this Wedell, this Wedell, to go and do such an asinine thing as this for me; that army has done nothing of any value from the beginning. An accursed unintelligence which has reigned among the generals of this army, and in particular Dohna and Wobersnow, has spoiled everything, officers and soldiers and the devil and his grandmother. I thought that Wedell would put this all right, and this gentleman loses me a battle, in the most untimely and inept fashion possible. I shall go over the whole situation, and see what there is to do. Good evening. You will certainly sleep better than I."

'I doubt it, Sire.'

"You are very good, my dear sir, good night again. Do not speak of all this, I beg you, for my good people here are easily alarmed."

The King was making notes on all the events of <sup>25th</sup> July. the campaign. He read me what he had written about the lost battle of Kay. Everything in it was harsh; in re-reading it to me, the King felt this himself.

"This is a little too strong," he said, "I must change it, don't you think?"

'If I may be permitted to say so, Sire, such a softening down will have a good effect, and as regards what concerns General de Dohna, perhaps

he is not the only one who has given proof of that unintelligence of which you spoke to me yesterday, and of which you have reason to complain.'

"Well then, I will also change that, and will simply say that Dohna handed over the command of the army to Wedell, because his legs were very much swollen, and he left to cure himself. Well, what are they saying in quarters about our unfortunate story? It is doubtless known, for bad news spreads only too quickly. Speak frankly to me."

'Yes, Sire, it is known that General de Wedell has lost a battle, and they are sorry for Your Majesty.'

The King said nothing thereupon, and spoke of geometry, proving to me the square of the hypotenuse.

"You see that I still know a little geometry. It is true I did not go very far in it, since it could not be very useful; but I learned of this science as much as I needed to give me an accurate turn of mind, and to force myself into a good method of reasoning. A few propositions of Euclid thoroughly understood, and meditated, sufficed for what I had in mind."

During this stay at Dürings-Vorwerk, His Majesty received letters from Voltaire in which he spoke of his niece, who was offended with the King, and of what others thought of it. His Majesty replied on the 18th as follows:

"You are in truth a singular personage, etc."

On this day, the eve of his departure, I was called twice.

This 28th  
July, 1759,  
at Dürings-  
Vorwerk.

“I start to-morrow, thus fortune which is so contrary to me wills; I do not know what fate will do with me. If you should not see me again, think sometimes of one who was the plaything of fate, and who wished you well.”

This speech touched me keenly, and I was moved to tears.

The King perceived them.

“I thank you, my dear sir, for the touching interest which you take in my fate. It is true my position is a cruel one, and I do not quite see how it can be improved; but we must not lose courage; let us pray and repeat ceaselessly:

*Daigne, daigne, mon Dieu, sur Kaunitz et sur elle.*

I will send you word now and then, as often as my affairs will permit me to do so.”

‘But, Sire,’ I said, ‘since Your Majesty speaks of writing, do you not wish me to accompany you?’

“The intention suffices, my dear sir, I assure you; I am obliged to you for it; but the thing is impossible. I cannot take anybody. The worthy Mitchell wanted to follow me also; but I told him as I tell you that the thing cannot be done, and he gave way to my reasons. I leave you here with my brother Henry, who will command the army opposed to the hat, who still clings to Marklissa. Pay your court to him sometimes.

You will find in him a very enlightened prince and a kingly heart. Good-bye, my dear sir, keep well, pray for me and that we see each other soon in more prosperous times. I have fought twelve battles, and there will perhaps soon be a thirteenth."

The departure of the King was to have been a secret, and everybody knew of it a day before. I went out, my heart wrung with sorrow and anxiety. To what trouble this good King had gone, and was about to go again; to what perils was he about to be once more exposed! These thoughts certainly did not send me to sleep.

The King started in the night with a part of his army, and marched to Sagan, where he found the troops which the Prince had led there to reinforce him. The Prince came to the Dürings-Vorwerk quarters, where he remained with the army until the 26th August. We received at headquarters the good news that the King had defeated near Guben the rear-guard of Haddick's army, whom M. de Loudon had left in that place with 12,000 men, that he had made 2000 prisoners, taken 4 cannon and 500 waggons. We next learned that, on the 5th, His Majesty had joined up near Müllrose with General de Wedell, and that, reinforced by the troops which General Finck had brought from Saxony, he had crossed the Oder at Reitwein during the night, and had encamped near Bischofssee.

This news delighted headquarters and the army;

29th July,  
1759, from  
Dürings-  
Vorwerk.

4th August.

5th August.

all thought that a battle would very soon take place, and all hoped for a successful issue, if His Majesty did not allow himself to be led too far by his desire to fight the Russians. Such was the common opinion. As no news from the King was received for several days, apprehension soon succeeded to the flattering hopes which had been conceived, and this apprehension increased when several weeks passed by without the least word of what was happening to the King's army being received; everybody gave way to foreboding; every one created monsters for himself to have the pleasure of combating them. The more Prince Henry, whose manner and air were closely observed, showed himself impenetrable, preserving always the same aspect and the same tranquillity, the greater was the tale of the disasters, and that which in the Prince should have reassured everybody was precisely what was found alarming. This surprised me all the more because these same people had an entire and justifiable confidence in the Prince's resource.

There has certainly been a battle, it was said one day, and that battle was disastrous. The King, it was said on another day, has been killed, and the enemy will march on Berlin; all will be lost. Each day brought forth new disasters.

A general who had invited me one afternoon to take coffee with him spoke to me in the following fashion, which struck me, and roused a lively indignation in me.

‘We know nothing of what is happening; everything is being hidden from us. The King has certainly been beaten, and why the devil was he in such a hurry to give battle! You will see, we shall all be exterminated, and that will be no great harm; it is time this infernal life and all our sufferings came to an end.’

‘But, General, what sort of language is this, and what a notion this is of yours! If our good King is exterminated, if misfortune befell his worthy brother, do you think then that the infernal life you speak of and all your sufferings would come to an end? Life would then become more painful still, and sufferings of more than one kind would accumulate to annihilate you.’

The general seemed surprised at what I said, and a little ashamed of what he had said to me.

‘It is certain,’ he said, ‘that some misfortune has happened, and why is the Prince hiding it from us, for there must surely be some news.’

‘It is because the Prince is prudent and wise that he is withholding the news if it is bad. He knows men and what they can bear; and he has perhaps often had occasion to observe with regret that bad news disheartens the army too much, that people give themselves up too easily to real or pretended fears, and that they pass too easily from hope to discouragement.’

‘If that is so,’ replied the general, ‘we must wait then.’

‘That is the wisest course,’ I said to him, ‘as

the most glorious is to perish for the cause of your prince and for that of your country.’

‘You must, however, acknowledge,’ he said to me finally, ‘that as regards news, it is much more convenient with the King. If I do not or cannot know directly what has happened or what is to happen, I ask my groom, and learn everything.’

‘You are certainly joking, General; if this were as you say, you would hide it from me and from yourself, for this is not treating with proper respect those whose duty it is to be cognisant of the operations which are to be carried out; and it is doing too great an honour to the grooms, who get the idea that they are important persons.’

Thus finished this conversation, which left a disagreeable impression on my mind for some time afterwards, as well as other conversations which I heard at Dürings-Vorwerk, and which amply proved to me that a large number of officers were more concerned with their own interests than with those of the King and country. Independently of the conduct of the King—good or bad, I do not judge—should not all their affection go out to this prince who was making such great endeavours to save the State and who spared himself so little? Did he not deserve, when you considered the sacrifice of his repose and his life, that interest which is not refused to any sufferer, even if it is by his own fault that he is suffering the misfortune which is trying him?

This concern for the King, his family and the

country was, however, the general feeling. I owe that praise to the major part of those I saw and learned to know well. I have seen this enthusiasm for the King and his brother carried to a high degree; I have seen a real sorrow for the disasters which occurred, and the greatest joy break out for successes, for even slight successes, and a perfectly genuine and well-marked readiness on the part of many to sacrifice their lives for the defence of the State.

‘Let them pillage my estates,’ a large number of officers said to me at Dürings-Vorwerk, ‘let them pillage, sack, burn my estates, let them take away the soil, our life even, we will gladly make these sacrifices for our great King, and his august family, provided that he and it may be happy according to the measure of our wishes.’

This was the kind of language which I heard then, and which was often repeated to me on prosperous occasions and in times of misfortune. Whenever I heard it, I gladly reported it to His Majesty, and I experienced a delicious joy when I saw that he was moved by the account which I gave him.

During the Prince’s stay at Dürings-Vorwerk, I occasionally had the honour of paying him my court. This Prince combined with an easy civility, which did not seek to humiliate, an acquaintance with most branches of knowledge—an exact, clear and precise knowledge on every subject on which he talked. He had a very logical mind in the principles he laid down and the good definitions



which he gave. He was more concerned to throw light on and so clear up the point under discussion than to embarrass those with whom he talked with the useless difficulties and the metaphysical subtleties in which the King, his brother, was past-master of arts, if I may use this expression. With this solid merit, he combined every agreeable talent.

It is not for me to speak of his military attainments and to appreciate them ; his operations will be sufficient evidence of these ; they give proof of a genius which sees all things greatly, which foresees all difficulties and averts them, which takes advantage of everything, and which on every occasion sees with admirable coolness what is best to be done.

But one of the qualities of this Prince of which I can speak with more knowledge was his humanity, which was praised even by the enemy. Moved always by the disasters of the war, and stirred by the fate of so many unfortunate victims of its fury, he delighted in mitigating the first and in bringing some relief to the latter. I have been much touched to see the poor inhabitants of the countryside place themselves in his path and praise and bless him, a suffrage far superior to that commanded by great abilities.

Prince Henry started on the 27th from Schmott-<sup>27th August.</sup> seiffen, and set up his camp at Bunzlau ; thence he marched to Sprottau. Different circumstances <sup>28th August.</sup> determined His Royal Highness to proceed to <sup>29th August.</sup> Sagan, his aim being to prevent Marshal Daun,

who was at Triebel with all his forces, from drawing nearer to the Russians and giving them the help for which they were continually asking, although they were in superior strength. This movement fulfilled the Prince's expectations; the Marshal marched to Sorau on the 2nd September.

5th September, Sagan,  
9th September, Lauban.

To drive the Austrian army still farther away, and to draw nearer the Elbe where General Finck had opposed to him the army of the Empire and General Haddick's corps, the Prince started on the 5th from Sagan, and, in five very rapid marches, he arrived at Lauban, which the enemy abandoned to retire to Görlitz behind the Neisse.

On his arrival, he detached General de Stutterheim, who took possession of Friedland, destroyed the stores and made the garrison prisoners of war. Hussar Major Reitzenstein, sent out in the direction of Gabel, engaged a detachment of infantry, and took three officers and several hundred men prisoners.

By these movements of the Prince, Marshal Daun was forced to return with great speed to Upper Lusatia; he arrived on the 10th at Bautzen with all his army. The Prince struck his camp at Lauban on this day, crossed the Queiss, and established his camp near Pfaffendorf, a league away from Görlitz. He rested on the 11th, and, on the 12th, he established himself near Hermannsdorf at a quarter of a league from the town. The left wing of the army rested on Mount Moys, where, on the 7th September, 1757, Lieutenant-General de

10th September.

12th September, at Hermannsdorf.

Winterfeldt was mortally wounded ; he remained in this position until the 23rd. The Prince, having learned that the Marshal had moved to Reichenbach, struck his camp at eight o'clock in the evening of the same day, with the view of concealing from the great Marshal the movement he intended to perform, marched during the whole of the night, crossed the Neisse near Rothenburg, and, after a council of war which lasted two hours, he continued his march, and in the night of the 24th to the 25th, he arrived at Klitten. General de Lentulus, who led the advance-guard of the Prince's army, learned at Lohsa that General Vela was encamped at Hoyerswerda with a corps of nearly 5000 Croats. He informed the Prince of this, who by certain brilliant movements surprised General Vela, and took him prisoner with nearly all his troops ; another hour of daylight, and not one of this corps would have escaped.

25th Sep-  
tember, at  
Hoyers-  
werda, 1300  
prisoners.

General Vela arrived at the house in which he had lodged ; the lady of the house said to him weeping : ' Ah, my dear General, my surprise is extreme to see you here.'—' Mine is no less, madam. Who the devil would have thought, after the information which had been given to me, that I should be attacked here, and that they would have been so woefully misled about the movements of the Prince ; he was thought to be marching into Silesia, and, for my misfortune, here he is.'

In fact, Marshal Daun, having learned that the Prince had struck his camp, believed that he

had marched into Silesia, and, on this false supposition, he hastened to Görlitz; but seeing himself turned and the Prince with a start on him, he returned to Bautzen, whence he marched with the greatest rapidity to Dresden, where he crossed the Elbe on the 30th.

28th September.

After this brilliant operation, the Prince started from Hoyerswerda on the 28th, and pitched his camp near Ruhland. On the 29th, he moved to Elsterwerda, and on the 2nd October he encamped near Torgau. On the 3rd, His Royal Highness crossed the Elbe and encamped near Belgern. On the 4th, he pitched his camp at Strehla, and joined up with the corps of General Finck. The imperial army arrived on the 6th, and took up a position opposite the Prince in the camp near Oschatz, the villages of Borne and Schönnewitz being between the two armies. During this stay at Strehla, we were very much on the alert. Every morning at four o'clock, the men were under arms until the reveille. The small skirmishes which took place during this encampment at Strehla always turned to our advantage. Our patrols seldom returned without having taken a few of the enemy prisoners.

29th September.  
2nd-4th October,  
1759.

16th October.

On the 16th, in the evening, after the evening gun, the Prince left Strehla, and marched in three columns to the camp of Torgau. Marshal Daun, having formed the plan of cutting off the Prince from his supplies, which came to us by the Elbe, detached for this purpose the Duke d'Areberg

with a corps of 16,000 men. This Duke, covered by woods, marched with so much secrecy, that it was not known until the 25th, after mid-day, that there was near Domnitzsch, by the Elbe, a considerable body of troops. Prince Henry marched immediately with General Finck's corps. As they debouched from the village of Vogelsang, the enemy flung a large number of grenades in order to set fire to the village ; but our cannon fired with such effect that the enemy were obliged to retire quickly. Night coming on prevented any further operations.

Next morning, the Prince went to reconnoitre the enemy, who had taken up a very good position behind the town of Domnitzsch : brooks, marshes and woods supported his right wing. 26th October.

As the camp was thought impregnable, General Wunsch was sent the same evening to Wittenberg to join up with General de Rebentisch, who had left Düben with the intention of marching to Bitterfeld. The two combined corps were to attack the Duke d'Aremberg's corps by the Pretzsch road. While General Finck's corps attacked the front of the enemy, another corps, under the orders of General de Wedell, moved towards Trossin to cut off the enemy's retreat. The attack was settled for the 29th at two o'clock after noon, but the enemy decamped during the night of the 28th to the 29th. Wishing to pitch his camp at Pretzsch, he met with Generals Rebentisch and Wunsch, who were in full marching 29th October.

order. Prince Henry marched with General Finck's corps to Pretzsch, and the Duke, seeing himself between two corps, retired with all possible precipitation, taking the road to Düben; one column went by way of Schmiedeberg, which could not be reached by our troops who were marching on Pretzsch, but the other column of the enemy, after having been violently bombarded by General de Rebentisch, was pursued on its march: it took the road through Gräfenhaynchen; General de Gemmingen formed its rear-guard at Sackwitz. Then General de Platen and Colonel de Gersdorff attacked this enemy rear-guard with their regiments, and took prisoners General de Gemmingen, Colonel Haller, 22 other officers, and 1166 men. The enemy in this affair lost a large amount of equipment, five waggons of munitions, mules and tents.

3rd November,  
1759.

The Prince, having returned to Torgau, started away again on the 3rd November, and pitched his camp at Belgern, and, on the 6th, at Strehla, and, on the 7th, at Dörschnitz. Intelligence officers who followed carefully all the movements of the Prince, from the time he took command of the army at Dürings-Vorwerk up to this moment, were all of opinion that the Prince's leadership was a masterpiece of cleverness, that they could do nothing better, if they wished to inform themselves, than to study his defensive operations, which were equal, in manœuvring and resourcefulness, to the best that was to be found in military history. Such was the general opinion.

The King confirmed it, by saying to me, when I had the honour of seeing him again :

“ My brother has guided his bark pre-eminently well. He is a pilot, indeed, my dear sir.”

Having learned that His Majesty was returning to rejoin the army, I decided to go and meet him. I had myself announced to the Prince, who was kind enough to receive me. I thanked him for all the marks he had given me of his kindness during the time I had been with his army. On this subject he said some very flattering things to me. When I spoke to him of my intention of going to meet the King, ‘ Do not do it,’ he replied, ‘ the season is very bad ; you will have a difficult ride, and, as the King has not commanded you to rejoin him on the way, your action may not please him.’

In spite of my urgent desire to see the King again, I yielded however to His Royal Highness’s representations, but, on leaving him, I found at my quarters an order to set out and go to Elsterwerda. I started out, crossed the Elbe at Torgau, and, on the 11th, I was at Elsterwerda, where I awaited the King.

He arrived in the afternoon. When I entered the room, he came up to me, embraced me, and, 11th November, 1759, at Elsterwerda. his eyes wet with tears, he said to me :

“ Ah, my friend, you see a man overwhelmed by grief and misfortune, who yet hopes to get over both of them.”

As this opening speech of his made me weep,

I could not proffer a word ; my situation seemed to touch His Majesty.

“ Be easy in your mind,” he said, “ you see me again. Perhaps I shall no longer be so unfortunate. Do you not think I am very much emaciated ? ”

‘ Exceedingly, Sire.’

“ And how could that not be so, after so many calamities and sufferings ? They were extreme, my dear sir, extreme. I do not yet understand how I have been able to hold up under them. I told you one day that it is almost foolishness for me still to exist. When my head is a little calmer, I will tell you of the dog of a life which I have led since I saw you. At the present moment, I am so tired, so prostrated, that I am unable to put two ideas together. I should like to show you, however, a small sample of my adventures.”

He took out a gold case, which had been flattened in a side pocket of his breeches by a ball from a case-shot. “ See,” he said, “ what has happened to this case ; you can get nothing out of it. You see that I have not been spared, and my coat.<sup>1</sup> Adieu, my dear sir, adieu. I am going to try to find in my bed a little of that rest of which my poor head has great need. Until to-morrow.”

12th November, at  
Elsterwerda.

I was called at three o'clock in the afternoon.

“ To-day, my dear sir, I am a little better than yesterday ; but the weakness of my legs is still extreme. You have no idea of all that I have had

<sup>1</sup> Its tail had been pierced, and the hole had been mended with white thread.



to suffer since our separation. What has been said of my adventures? Speak frankly to me, you will oblige me.”

‘ We were for a long time without news of you ; people hoped at first, and then feared. They whispered in each other’s ear with the keenest sorrow that there had been a serious affair, and that Your Majesty had been dangerously wounded in it.’

“ There was no dangerous wound, my dear sir. I only had a bruise in covering the retreat. The regiment of pioneers was taken behind me, and your obedient servant, who retired last, would himself have been taken, if Pritzwitz with his hussars had not attacked the enemy who were pursuing me. In this way, I had time to get through a defile, in which I had some little difficulty. But what did they say where you were when finally they learned the disastrous news of the lost battle? I should say that they argued not a little about me and this affair, did they not? Speak, I know my people.”

‘ Your people, Sire, were very much shocked and frightened by the account of the misfortune which had happened. I venture to assure Your Majesty that you would have been shocked yourself, if you had heard what the greater part of them said. The shock and fright calmed down, when it was known positively that you were well, and that you had only had a slight bruise. It was undoubtedly a great misfortune to lose this battle ;

but our King lives, and he will repair the disaster. That is what the army said.'

The King appeared to be much affected by this true account which I gave him.

"Well, then, my friend, am I not right to love this army and to expose myself for it, since it exposes itself so much for me! But what did they say about my having fought this battle and of the causes which led to the defeat, and at what figure did they estimate our losses?"

This was a delicate point. As His Majesty urged me very much to speak quite frankly to him, I told him that many people thought that he had been in too great a hurry to give battle, that he had pushed the enemy too hardly, that, if he had been satisfied with the great advantages which he had at first gained, the enemy would have retired,<sup>1</sup> and Loudon would probably not have charged down on us with his cavalry, which till then had not suffered. 'And as for your losses, Sire, they were estimated at over 18,000 men killed and nearly 12,000 wounded.<sup>2</sup> It was said that the Austrians and the Russians, who had as many wounded as Your Majesty, had only 4000 men left after the battle.'

The King thanked me very much for having spoken so frankly to him.

"You know these people well enough, and more-

<sup>1</sup> The enemy, who were retiring through a deep ravine behind Kunersdorf, would have continued their flight.

<sup>2</sup> The King had brought into play all the resources of his mind, or rather of his genius, to repair the loss of two battles,

over I have myself given you a pretty good notion of them, my dear sir, so that you have been able to convince yourself that they judge and decide more often than not without really knowing what they are talking about. I think you will give more credit to what I shall tell you; this is the truth: having gathered round me all the troops I could, you perceive that I had no time to lose in endeavouring to beat the Russians. Saxony defenceless, the army of the Empire which could easily penetrate as far as Berlin, General Haddick who had occupied the camp of Müllrose and who could easily march on the capital, all these considerations, my dear sir, forced me to act with the greatest celerity. It is not true that I tried to push too far the advantages which I had gained over the enemy; as everything was happening exactly as I could wish, I naturally sought to take advantage of the goodwill of my troops. We had completely smashed their left wing, which fell back through a deep ravine until it was behind Kunersdorf. Our first battalions which pursued the enemy through the ravine went forward into this ravine with perhaps too much ardour and some disorder; the other battalions, following too closely and with too much rapidity, were in difficulties, when the Prince of Würtemberg, impatient at his idleness, charged the Russian infantry at an inconvenient moment, was repulsed, and threw our troops into disorder; and Loudon, letting loose his cavalry right and left, plunged our troops into

Battle of  
Kunersdorf,  
12th August,  
1759.

confusion, and they fled in the greatest disorder. You can imagine, my dear sir, the confusion and consternation of my troops. At the mere sound of the Cossacks, the battalions which were formed up in a good position fled some distance, without our being able to reach them and stop them. It would have been all over with us, my friend, if the Russians and the Austrians, taking advantage of their success, had pursued my poor, disheartened troops ; but being content with their own self-congratulation on their success and their good fortune, they gave me time to recover ; and I, poor devil, who, on the night of the action, had not 6000 men, had 28,000 at the end of a few days. It is false, you may be assured, that we had, as you were foolishly told, 20,000 men killed, wounded and prisoners. My losses amounted to 10,000 men only all told ; my enemies lost 24,000, and this must be so, since they acknowledge it. All this turned out better than I dared hope. Thus all the evil as well as all the good which we fear or hope never comes about. I will not tire you with an account of all the means I used to drive off the Russians, to prevent them from besieging Glogau, and to force them to go back into Poland. This would take too long for the moment ; but I will read you what I composed. You will see that I did not lose my time, and you will be all the more grateful to me because I was rather ill after the loss of our terrible battle. If it is not so good as it might have been, blame that

accursed attack of gout, which gave me a good deal of suffering, and the effects of which I still feel.

“When crossing the Oder at Koeben, near that mill which General de Schulenberg once made famous by his retreat before Charles XII., I conceived the idea of writing an account of the military talents and of the character of this prince. You will remember that I have always said to you that the prevalent notions concerning this conqueror were neither clear enough nor precise enough. I think I have described him well, and, to imitate d’Argens, I will read you my *moorsel*; I have written it with the most scrupulous impartiality.”

In fact, the piece was well written, and rendered exactly what His Majesty had told me several times of this prince.

“You see,” he said, “I have not followed Voltaire, who sometimes praises and sometimes blames, according to the way the wind of circumstance and interest blows. He has not blushed to contradict himself. His contradictions about this prince will be an eternal blot on the gentleman historiographer of the chamber.

“When I have a few moments to spare, I will touch up my dissertation; I will then have twelve copies printed, and you shall have one. I think that soldiers who read me will find that I have set down exactly what should be thought of so extraordinary a prince. But do you know, sir, I have been talking a good deal, and that, having to set

out to-morrow, I must rest a little? Good evening and good night.”

The sitting, in fact, had not been a short one; I did not leave until seven o'clock in the evening.

This 13th  
November,  
at Hirsch-  
stein.

The King, who had perhaps been over-excited by his having spoken for four hours in succession, did not shut his eyes the whole night. He arrived at these new quarters completely worn out, and, after half an hour at the dinner-table, he gave orders for the march on the following day, and went to bed. Thus I did not have the advantage of seeing him on this day.

14th Novem-  
ber, at  
Krögis.

We arrived rather early in this place, where was pitched the camp, which for the first time was arranged in battle order. I was called at five o'clock in the evening. I found His Majesty busy with the correction of his Charles XII.

“This short piece, my dear sir, interests me, and all the more because, never having read anything impartial or accurate about this prince, I desire that my work should have these two merits; and it will have them, I warrant. Too much boldness and too little consecutiveness in his operations destroyed this prince. If he had continued to follow the plan of his first three campaigns, which are admirable, he would have done everything he wished.”

‘But, Sire, are not bold strokes necessary in war? I can easily conceive that you may expose yourself to disaster in consequence, but they are nevertheless necessary.’

“Yes, they are necessary; but you should never, my dear sir, undertake them on the idea that your enemy is weak or lacking in intelligence, and, should the bold stroke not come off, you must so arrange that this failure does not cause you to miscarry in your main object.

“As for myself, my friend, at this very moment I must act with much boldness to repair all the disasters of this campaign, which has been so fatal to me. I am meditating a stroke, which, if it succeeds, as I hope, will give us all cause to be content, and the campaign which will follow, if it is written that I must carry on another, will be a mere trifle compared with the one I am about to bring to an end. But I must not make any mistakes now. I am dealing with people who know how to camp well, and who are prudent. If with these advantages, which cannot be denied them, they had a little boldness, a greater spirit of combination and the ability to take advantage of their successes, they could have finished the tragedy a long while ago, my dear sir. But everything must be said: when a leader cannot act on his own account, he cannot hope for any great success, *experto credi roberto*,—there is some more of my Latin, and this is the hour of Morpheus, who will perhaps treat me better than he has done on the last few nights. We shall stay two days here, and shall see something of each other. Good evening, pray that my stroke, which I will tell you about to-morrow, shall succeed. Good evening.”

15th November, 1759,  
at Krögis.

I was called on this day at four o'clock. His Majesty seemed to me in a very good humour.

“ You see me well to-day, my dear sir, and it is because I have slept like a king. This has not happened to me since my pitiable story of Kunersdorf; see what our poor machine depends on: a little rest, a little sleep, a little health makes all our philosophy. Our sleep is our gaiety. If a few successes are now added, you will see me once again with all the good humour which you formerly thought so admirable. But see, my dear sir, how modest I am; I do not ask the gods for several successes; I desire one only, to retake Dresden. Dresden in my power assures my winter quarters, and enables me to keep the Austrians in a continual state of anxiety about Bohemia. The consecrated hat, who takes such delight in perching himself on high mountains, will shelter himself in this way from all attack. Do you know what I shall do? I shall leave him planted on his beloved mountains, and with strong detachments I shall turn him so well that I shall place insurmountable obstacles in the way of his convoys of supplies, and I shall force my hat to abandon both Dresden and his steep rocks. To make everything easier still, I shall make incursions into Bohemia.”

‘ I accept the augury, Sire; this success will lead to many others. You will have more than you desire.’

“ God grant it,” he said, “ pray earnestly to Him; your prayer will be worth more than mine. How-



ever, my dear sir, if I do not succeed in all this, it will certainly not be my fault. In war, you can neither hope too much nor despair too much. An incident which you were not able to foresee upsets the best laid plan. I do not wish to keep you any longer now. I have still several other letters to write. Good evening and good night."

The King, who was very busy on this day, did not send for me. He went to bed at an early hour, and on the following day, at early morning, he set out with the army for the camp near Kobach. After having crossed the Tribsche in three columns, the first column went by way of Roth-Schoemberg, Schmiedewalde, Birkenhayn and Wilsdruf; the second column passed through Robschütz, Kottewitz, Lugenheim and Saxdorf; the third column through Korbitz, Meissen, Neustadt, Röhrsdorf and Klipphausen to reach Hündorf and Kobach. The army encamped before Wilsdruf, and the headquarters were before Wilsdruf, General de Zieten was sent to Kesselsdorf, General Wedell to Meissen, General Diericke to the other side of the Tribsche, and General Finck to Dippoldiswalde and to Maxen.

I was with His Majesty for a moment on this day, and I found him worn out with the march he had made.

"Ah, my dear sir, I am fit for nothing now; I am getting old and very old; my strength is leaving me; I am losing my voice."

He recited to me the end of the funeral oration

16th November, at Krögis.

on Prince de Condé, where Bossuet pours out his lamentations ; the King had recited this passage to me several times before.

“Have you heard anything to-day about my march and my expeditions. Some will say they are all very well conceived ; the greater number will blame my manœuvres ; they are very critical here.”

‘No, Sire, I heard nothing and have seen nobody.’

“To-morrow we shall be at Wilsdruf ; if you hear anything, do me the pleasure of telling me what it is, for you sometimes learn things of which you can take advantage.”

While appreciating what he said, I yet thought I could perceive that His Majesty had himself some anxiety about the different expeditions he had sent off.

18th November, 1759.

The King took up his quarters at Wilsdruf, and billeted the army in the villages. All those whom I saw on my arrival denounced in strong terms the expedition which the King had sent to Maxen.

‘Finck is lost, you will see ; it is unheard-of that His Majesty should let himself be decoyed by Marshal Daun. What, because he has sent the army of the Empire into the neighbourhood of Pirna and has sent back into Bohemia the baggage column and his sick, the King takes these arrangements as a preparation for the retreat and sends Finck with 10,000 men to be captured with his

troops? Prince Henry disapproved highly of the King, his brother's, behaviour. He made the most serious remonstrances to him; he pointed out that Finck and his corps was in the power of the enemy, and that this was inevitable. It is even said that the conversation was very violent, and that the Prince retired as displeased as he could be and resolved to leave the army: 'If you are absolutely bent on it, brother, well and good; but if harm comes of it, as it certainly will, the misfortunes of the State will be on your shoulders.' The Prince, quite heated by this conversation, said to several officers: 'I spoke as a true patriot and as a good brother; he would not listen to me. If only the army were stationed a little more to the right, to be within reach of Dippoldiswalde, there would not be so much reason for apprehension.'

Such was the language of nearly all the officers of the army. I decided, should the King ask me what was being said, to report it to him quite frankly.

At four o'clock I was called; I found the King busy with some verses; imitating Voltaire, he was making a parody of Ecclesiastes.

"You see me in the lists against the author of the *Henriade*; he will beat me, but at least I am trying, and amusing myself."

He composed in my presence several stanzas, which he afterwards read to me, and, as he asked me for my opinion, I pointed out to him, but presenting my remark as a doubt, that there was

an hiatus in one line and an ambiguous word in another.

“ You are right, my dear sir, I thank you. How difficult it is to do well, when your head is filled with a thousand and one things ; but what would you ! These scrawlings occupy my mind, and mitigate my sorrows ! ”

The King rose, and looked at his large map, which he always had hung up in his room ; after having studied it for some time, he said to me :

“ Come here ; I want to show you Finck’s position.”

My heart was beating ; I was about to give him an account of what I had heard ; but reflecting promptly that I might irritate him, and that what I should say would be useless after all that the Prince had said, I contented myself with speaking on my own account.

‘ Sire, will you pardon me, if I who am very ignorant venture to spread my ignorance before you ? You will no doubt laugh.’

“ Well, well, what do you think of Finck’s position ? ”

‘ Sire, is it not to be feared that the enemy, marching behind him, under the pretext of retiring, may envelop him, that Marshal Daun, who can hold you in check with his first line, may send the second to attack your general in the rear in combination with the army of the Empire, which will fall on his right wing, and with the Croats, which will attack the left ? ’

The King must have understood from what I said that it did not come from an altogether ignorant man, and that it must have been dictated to me by men of the profession, and should have asked me whence I obtained all these reflections ; but he did nothing of the kind.

“ No, my friend, no, you have nothing to fear. You will see that my consecrated hat and his partners will be delighted to return to Bohemia to scratch their — there at their ease. I will read my stanzas to you again.”

I listened to them with no pleasure, so struck had I been with what I had heard and with what I saw of the tranquillity of the King. After the reading and several slight corrections, he wished me good evening, and I retired.

Headquarters were more uneasy on this day than they had been on the day before. An aide-de-camp coming away from the King in the morning told me that he had seemed anxious. Criticism went on at a great pace in the morning : Finck would assuredly be taken ; why not have left him at Dippoldiswalde ; the Austrians would then perhaps have retired of their own accord, and we should have been able to have given them a nice little rear-guard action, not attacking them, however, until it was impossible for them to return on their steps ; why not have listened to the Prince, who always saw everything from its true point of view, and always with greater coolness ? There was no end to these ‘ wherefores.’ As they formed the

19th November, 1759,  
at Wilsdruf.

talk of the whole army, they made me anxious for the position of the King, for his repose, and for the preservation of such brave troops.

At five o'clock I was called. I found the King busy with his verses of the day before.

"I have advanced a good deal, my dear sir; after your departure, I wrote for another half an hour, and I have been at work since half-past two. What is the time?"

'Five o'clock, Sire.'

"Ah, I have done enough, then. I will read to you all I have done. . . . Well, what do you say to all that; did you notice anything which shocked your ears?"

'Nothing, Sire.'

My poor ears were ringing too much with what I had heard in the morning to be sensible of the harmony of verses. I confess that I had heard hardly anything of this composition, so anguished was I in my mind, and the more I saw the King tranquil and busy with things alien to his position, the more I suffered.

"Let us see our Finck again on the map."

He showed him to me and the position of the enemy.

"That, my dear sir, is the march which he will make to extricate himself. When that is done, I shall be able to breathe more freely, and to occupy myself with things that please me."

I said nothing to all this.

"You seem very serious to-day?" he said to me.

‘ I am so, it is true, Sire, or rather I am melancholy because on all sides I have been given to fear for General Finck’s corps, which they say is in a hazardous position.’

“ What do you mean, hazardous ! Fear nothing for him, and don’t you know my people, who often get frightened of everything, and take pleasure in criticising my measures, even those which have been most carefully thought out ? ”

I was about to reply, when His Majesty said to me :

“ I have still some orders to give, my dear sir, so good night. Don’t be anxious, sleep calmly, adieu.”

I learned in the morning that the King, who affected so much tranquillity, and who had recommended the same calm of mind to me the evening before, had, after my departure, given proof of a great deal of anxiety about the position of his general, Finck. Instead of the orders which he had to give, as he told me, he busied himself with his parody, but he busied himself with it anxiously. At the least noise which he heard, he called a lackey to ask him what the noise was, and whether any news had come. He rose several times to make sure himself that there were no officers in the ante-chamber, and when he was told that there was nobody there, “ I thought,” he said, “ that I heard one of my aides-de-camp speaking.”

This 20th  
November,  
1759, at  
Wilsdruf.

We learned that General Kleist had burned several military stores and villages as reprisals

for those which the Austrians and the Russians had given to the flames, and that he had taken a rather large number of prisoners. This was not bad, but these successes did not compensate for the real anxiety which Finck's army was causing.

I was called at four o'clock. I found the King in a state of extreme agitation ; each time the door was opened, his face became inflamed.

" Ah, my dear sir, here is bad news ; I am no longer fortunate ; my time has passed ; I must expect all the misfortunes."

And what had just been announced was that there was no news.

" What reassures me a little," he said to me (for he confessed to me now that he was very anxious over Finck), " is that I have sent General Hülsen with 8000 men to dislodge Brentano from Dippoldiswalde, to which place he has marched, and to secure the communications of the army with the troops at Maxen. What will come of all this, my dear sir ? If I could uplift my soul, and read in this gloomy future, it might sometimes be useful."

' But, Sire, I am firmly of opinion that generally it would be a great misfortune to foresee all that might happen.'

" You are right, and, nevertheless, I desire this instant to know what the cannonade we heard was about and what is to come of it, and I desire this more than I could tell you. I have sent many people for reports of what is happening, but none



returns. Perhaps I shall have news during the night, perhaps not, and I shall lie down with that uncertainty. Ah, what a life mine is, my dear sir! I am making you lead a pretty gloomy life, too, my dear sir."

'It is so and always will be, Sire, so long as I do not see Your Majesty as happy as I could wish. I am only concerned about Your Majesty, and this is a truth in which I beseech you to believe.'

"You are very good, Catt. If I come out well of all this, you will not have lost all your trouble."

The King often went to his map.

"If they attack Finck, he has a number of ways of returning. See," he said to me, "the positions, see the roads he can take. The great point is that my generals must not lose their heads."

'I hope, Sire, that they will not lose them. It is not the first time that they are attacking or defending themselves. They are in the habit of doing both well.'

"We shall see, my dear sir, to-morrow, and, on this, I wish you good evening, and that you may enjoy a better rest than I shall have, for I tell you again, I am very anxious, more for the honour of my arms than for a loss of troops that might be taken. Honour and good fame are everything."

This day was a day of sorrow for the whole army, and for all those who were at headquarters, and especially for the good King. The cannonade of the day before, the platoons of soldiers in blue,

This 21st  
November,  
1759, at  
Wilsdruf.

which from the advanced posts were seen marching off towards Dresden, doubled the general anxiety about General Finck's corps, and when, towards four o'clock in the afternoon, two peasants arrived and announced that the general's whole corps had been taken, the consternation was universal. Called at half-past four, I found in the King's ante-chamber his aide-de-camp general, de Kruse-marck, and all the suite. At the sight of the two peasants and the demeanour of all the officers who were there, I cried :

‘Heavens, the worst has happened ; the corps is taken, and what is our dear King doing ?’

‘He knows nothing yet,’ they replied, ‘nobody dares inform him of this disastrous news.’

‘But, for the love of heaven, gentlemen, what are you thinking about ! In so dangerous a position all delay is precious to the enemy and harmful to the King. What have you to risk ?’

‘But you know our master.’

‘Well, then, I will take the risk. I will tell him this cruel news with the keenest sorrow. It is important that he should know it as soon as possible. There is not a moment to lose.’

I told the lackey on duty to announce me, and I entered immediately. The King, busy with his verses, did not perceive that I was there. What agitation did I not feel ! What reflections passed through my mind, and what anguish in my soul ! Finally, after seven or eight minutes, the King, having finished his strophe, looked at me :

“ Ah, there you are, my dear sir, have you learned nothing ? ”

‘ Yes, Sire, but what I have learned is serious.’

“ What, my dear sir, what, my dear sir ? ” and he changed colour.

‘ Sire, a large number of troops in blue have been seen marching off towards Dresden.’

“ But, just heaven, is this certain ? ”

‘ Yes, Sire, there are here in the ante-chamber with your aide-de-camp general two peasants who have just arrived with the news of what I have the honour to tell you.’

The King ran to the door, opened it, and himself called the general and the peasants.

“ What is all this, what does it mean ? ”

The peasants very calmly scratched their heads, and, while scratching them, said : ‘ Majesty, we saw your cavalry dismount, and your soldiers all taken by the enemy ; and what seemed very funny to me,’ said one peasant, still scratching himself, ‘ was to see all this cavalry getting down from their horses.’<sup>1</sup>

The King dismissed the peasants and the aide-de-camp general. Left alone with me, he walked up and down the room with great strides for several minutes ; then, embracing me and placing his hand on my shoulder, he cried :

“ Ah, my friend, what a blow, God, what a

<sup>1</sup> The King lost in this unfortunate affair 18 battalions, incomplete, it is true, 35 squadrons, 66 cannon, many flags, standards and kettle-drums, and nine generals: Lieutenant-General Finck, Major-Generals de Rebentisch, de Mosel, de Lindstedt, de Wunsch, de Bredow, de Platow, de Fasolt, de Gersdorff. All the baggage was saved.

blow ! Is it possible ! Have I come to Saxony to bring all my misfortune there. It is a frightful blow, I cannot believe it."

He called General de Krusemarck, his aide-de-camp, again.

"But, my dear sir, is it possible ? Have my generals all lost their heads ? Should they not have retired in time ? Did they not have roads by which they could retire ? Has the devil blinded them all ? This is so horrible that I cannot yet believe it."

'The thing is certain,' said the general. 'It affects me with the deepest sorrow.'

"Judge of mine, dear Krusemarck, judge of it, I beg you.'

The general wept ; I wept too. What a scene, good Lord ! The King gave an order to the general, and dismissed him. He continued to walk up and down the room with great strides, crying out from time to time :

"Is the thing possible, my dear sir ?"

Then he looked at his map for a moment, and coming up to me and placing his hand again on my shoulder :

"This, my dear sir, is one of those blows of fortune which still remained to it to overwhelm me with ; but we must not lose our head ; we must be firm, and I will be so ; yes, my dear sir, I will be firm, in spite of all the consecrated hats. I have at the moment a thousand things to do in which you cannot help me. I shall ask my brother to

come here, and together we will see how we shall extricate ourselves from this devilish pass. Good evening, my dear sir, if I were the only unfortunate, I should console myself."

What an agitation at headquarters and in the army when they were certain of this disastrous news. Our luck is out, they said pretty unanimously, and all we have to expect is a host of reverses. How quickly they forgot in that moment all the victories won, and all the King was capable of to remedy misfortunes, and to make good losses and defeats! When they saw the King once more after the loss of the battle of Kunersdorf, I heard them saying on all sides: 'We have nothing to fear so long as this great man remains at our head. He may be beaten, but he cannot be conquered. He will always find in the beauty of his genius every possible means to save us.' And now they only saw a real and total loss.

This 22nd  
November,  
1759, at  
Wilsdruf.

I was called on this day at three o'clock, and I remained until nine. What a painful sitting!

"What a horrible night, Catt, I have passed! So I have brought into Saxony the misfortune that persecutes me. Just as I was about to finish the campaign in a rather brilliant manner, to see the enemy leave Dresden and suffer losses in his retreat, to rest my poor troops who have had to undergo so much, I must bear the most unheard-of affront. This idea pursues me continually. There are moments when I cannot imagine the reality."

I tried in vain to divert him from his ideas;

but they still came back to his mind revolted by this infamy.

“ See, my friend, how unfortunate I have been ! Treated harshly by my father, shut up for three months alone in a room, where I had to suffer many insults, where I had nothing to fall back on except Bossuet on the *Variantes*, and Basnage, unfortunate in all manners during this war, I have seen for a few moments only, at Rheinsberg, the image of happiness. I have moments now of impatience and indignation which I strive to repress. I am like a convict who has been fettered, and who struggles to break his chains.”

In this way he expressed his sorrow to me, walking up and down with me in his room. He sat down before the table, and, taking a paper, he showed me some verses he had tried to write. I say ‘had tried,’ for none was finished. This sight, which proved to me the agitation of his soul, touched and saddened me very much.

“ To distract myself, my dear sir, I scrawled all this ; but it is impossible for me to do anything with a vestige of common-sense in it.”

‘ In your present position, I can easily conceive that it is impossible to write good verses, but in endeavouring to compose some, whatever they may be, Your Majesty will at least mitigate your sorrows for a few moments.’

“ You are right, my dear sir, I will try.”

He composed in my presence a strophe which was not at all bad.

“No, it won't do, and what the devil am I thinking about !”

He rose, and went to his map, which he considered for a long time.

“See, my dear sir, what my people might have done, if they had had the least common-sense. They could have retired through Giesshübel into Bohemia, and thence made for Saxony by way of Einsiedel, Asch, or Basberg. They could have taken the road to Glashütte, which leads through Frauenberg to Freiberg. They could have saved the greater part, but my b——, less concerned for their honour and their reputation than for their baggage, had the infamy to lay down their arms. In view of my situation, the loss is considerable, but honour, my dear sir, honour is an immense loss which cannot be repaired. It needs centuries to wipe out this loss and this shameful blot. I call reason and philosophy to my aid ; but they do not help me ; they cannot alter fate. Happy, my dear sir, happy, I have often said it to you, is he

Qui satisfait de son humble fortune,  
Libre du joug superbe où je suis attaché,  
Vit dans l'état obscur où les Dieux l'ont caché.

“But what a sorrowful life I am leading you, my friend. I should keep all my anxieties shut up within me ; but we love to talk of our misfortunes to those who we think are affected by them.”

‘I am that, Sire ! Ah, what would I not do to mitigate them !’

“I believe you, my dear sir, and I am touched

by it. It is late ; I have kept you a long while. I will not abuse your kindness any further. Good evening ; but one word more. Something tells me that to-morrow there might easily be a fight ; if I should be fortunate, if I could beat the hat, this would be delightful, my dear sir, and would cheer me up. In spite of the fatigues of my troops and the anxieties they have suffered, I am certain that they are very much in the mood to fight. Good evening.”

This 23rd  
November,  
1759, at  
Wilsdruf.

In the morning, Marshal Daun, doubtless to try the spirit of our troops, advanced at the head of his vanguard as far as the advanced posts of the King's army, but the Marshal returned very quickly to his camp when he saw our army in battle order and in the humour to receive him. The whole thing resolved itself into a cannonade which was very violent. While going along the first line, I heard a general cry, and I asked Count de Henckel, a very worthy officer of the Prince of Prussia regiment, what was the meaning of all this tumultuous shouting.

‘ They are shouts of joy,’ he said, ‘ and of their desire to fight. Let them come, let the enemy come ; we shall receive them like good Prussians ; it must all be decided to-day ; we must have our revenge : to conquer or die for our Fritz.’

To conquer or die, was the general shout.

I shall never forget this touching spectacle, which did so much honour to the army, and all the feelings it aroused in my heart.



The Austrians, who had driven in our advanced posts, scattered a quantity of bills in which they had described Finck's mishap. These bills, very far from frightening our troops, filled them on the contrary with the desire to avenge the affront which the general had received.

His Majesty sent for me at eleven o'clock, after his return to his quarters.

“ What did I tell you, my dear sir, of the consecrated hat ? The great general, swollen out with his successes, imagined that he would not find me so well prepared to receive him. He thought perhaps that, like my swine of the other day, I should have decamped like a coward ; but the good man counted without his host. Perhaps this winter even I shall still give him much work to do ; but at the present moment I am not well, my dear sir. I have a few twinges of gout again ; it only wanted that to finish me off. However, I shall treat both my gout and all my other misfortunes as you know how I treat them. I shall spur on my beast, and make it go, cost what may. Should I spare it, my dear sir, when I see so many brave men sacrificing themselves for me and for the country ! ”

I related to him what I had heard in the lines, and what Count de Henckel had explained to me. Tears flowed from his eyes.

“ Well, then, could I with a good grace spare myself ? I would have myself cut up in little pieces, if by this sacrifice I could procure peace

for so many people who have fought for it. Until after dinner, at three o'clock. I have still the orders of the day to give, and a letter to write."

On my return from the King, I found an officer awaiting me at my quarters. 'Do you know, my friend, that His Majesty, after having discussed the situation at length with his brother, Prince Henry, on the evening of the sad news, wrote to him after he had left him: "*Would to heaven, my dear brother, that I might have been laid up with the gout for another seven or eight days before rejoining you. This reverse would not have happened.*"'

'No, I know nothing of this letter; if it is as you tell me, the King was right in expressing such a desire. He would have suffered less from the spasms of gout than he will suffer from his disaster and the shame attached to the loss he has sustained.'

At three o'clock in the afternoon, I returned to the King, as he had ordered. I found him again occupied with his verses.

"This is what I have done since you left me; I will read it to you. This is not good, or rather it is very bad, but what can I do in my position!"

'Seek some distraction, Sire, of whatever kind it may be. All will be well when you have managed to drive off your sorrowful ideas a little.'

"Drive them off, my dear sir; the thing is very difficult. I see Finck continually at the tip of my pen."

The verses were better than those of the first days; but in them all it could easily be seen that

he composed only in the endeavour to calm the grief he felt. After reading his verses to me, he apostrophised General Finck and several other generals with a vehemence which told me everything he had on his mind ; but he praised General Wunsch to me.

“That is a man,” he said ; “he alone did not lose his head. He wanted to break through with the cavalry ; but the scoundrels prevented him from carrying out that fine act of valour.”

To drive away these sorrowful ideas, I tried to bring him back to poetry. I even suggested the difficulty of competing with Voltaire, especially in those small pieces of *vers de société*. I quoted several to him, imagining that he would perhaps try his hand on these subjects ; but I was wrong. Finck returned to the scene, and he would have doubtless kept me a long while on this sad subject, if an officer had not been announced as coming from General de Hülsen. He wished me good evening.

“Sleep better than I shall. Until to-morrow.”

I was called at six o'clock ; my audience was very short, because he was suffering from a hemorrhoidal colic.

This 24th  
November,  
1759, at  
Wilsdruf.

“I am very unwell, my dear sir. Everything conspires to torment me.”

The King talked to me, during the few moments I was with him, only of his plan of retirement, of which he had already spoken to me once or twice ; but not in such detail as he did this time.

“ And, my friend, if I can one day leave all this frightful worry, this is how I should like to pass the remainder of the days allowed me by fate. I should set aside for myself a province whose revenues would amount to 100,000 crowns a year. I would choose a few friends, who would be upright, enlightened, obliging, but without flattery. I would drive off placemen and schemers with all my strength. I should not wish to be too near a town, because there would always be the ceremonies of royalty and respect. I should make this inviolable law that every one should be free, should speak and should act with me as a friend, and certainly I should be an affectionate, accommodating and faithful one. Every foreigner who was sociable, well-mannered, intelligent and known, moreover, would be received by me with open arms ; but I should keep away with the greatest care all those who were attracted by simple and silly curiosity. My dinner would be very simple ; 12,000 crowns would suffice for my table ; I would employ 20,000 on my whims, and would allot the rest to my companions. I should leave them something after my death, so that they might think of me sometimes. Thus, my friend, I would sow with a few flowers the short stretch of road that still remains to me to cover.”

He quoted these lines of Chaulieu :

*Ainsi sans chagrin, sans noirceur, etc.*

He showed me the drawing he had made in the morning of the house which he would have for

himself and for the six friends who would remain with him, he said. He had made a small wing for travellers of merit who proposed to stay a few days with him.

“ Adieu, my dear sir, I am going to bed. Think of me and of my nice little plan of retirement. Good evening.”

I went to His Majesty's quarters on this day at seven o'clock in the evening. I found him free of his colic and busy with his writing.

This 25th  
November,  
1759, at  
Wilsdruf.

“ At last, my dear sir, my piece on Solomon is finished and fairly well corrected. I finish with something which I do not believe, but, since everybody believes it, it is decent and honest not to say otherwise.”

This talk of decency and honesty pleased me, and I smiled as I heard it.

“ What are you laughing at, my dear sir ? ”

‘ At seeing Your Majesty so indulgent for the way of thinking of others, when it is not your own way.’

“ But tell me, where and when have you heard that I have no respect for the beliefs of others, especially when they build their hopes and their happiness on these beliefs ? ”

I did not wish to say how many times I had noticed the contrary. I contented myself with assuring him that his way of thinking was reason itself, and that, in fact, it would be cruel, as he said, to distress any one about his beliefs, without being able to offer him others which were more consoling.

“You are right, my dear sir. Do you think that my piece is good enough to be sent to the patriarch?”

‘Yes,’ I said, ‘if you revise it again at some quieter time.’

“Oh, I shall be in no hurry, I assure you. I was in too great a haste to inform him that I should retake Dresden, and I repent of having done it. If I had waited a few days, he would not have had my letter, which pains me more than I can tell you. The old monkey will sneer and laugh at me and my adventure.”

‘He will perhaps be touched by it, Sire.’

“Touched! You know the b—— too well.”

This brought him back to his disaster.

“The more I think of this blow, my dear sir, the less am I able to get over it. It happened almost at the same spot where I took the Saxons. I told you, and I repeat, that I cannot have any further good fortune. I am almost sure, it is true, that I shall extricate myself from this evil pass, that, within a little and in spite of so many checks, I shall retain all the ground which I had at the beginning of the campaign; but what is all this at the price of what I lost by the wretched manœuvre of that accursed Finck. It will spread the greatest bitterness over the rest of my existence. Adieu, my dear sir; before going to bed, I shall read my book of consolation, the third book of Lucretius. As you know, this is my favourite reading at times of reverse and sorrow. This man

helps me, as also does my Marcus Antoninus. Good evening.”

On these two days I was only called to see him for a minute in his bed, where he was suffering very much from the pains of gout ; but a heavy sweat did him so much good that on the following day he felt no further pain.

“ I think, my dear sir, that the devil is at the bottom of all this suffering of mine. At this moment I have more need than ever of a little health, and here I am each instant suffering from something fresh. If all this, even something worse, had come upon me before my arrival at Elsterwerda, I should not have said a word ; but now that I must act, and act energetically, I am complaining about the physical ills I feel, and, my dear sir, I have moral ills more than enough.

“ I corrected my *Solomon* a little this morning ; it is a long way from Voltaire’s, don’t you think ? ”

‘ It would not be astonishing, Sire, if that were so. Voltaire has every possible quiet in which to write, and Your Majesty has not ; he writes for the public, and you only write as a distraction.’

“ You are right, Catt, but to all you say must be added the great point : he has a genius for verse, and I haven’t. I am only a poor dilettante who has great need of indulgence. For the rest, the strophe where the

Lion mort ne vaut pas  
Le moucheron qui respire,<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [ ‘ A dead lion is not worth the fly that breathes. ’ ]

is exceedingly good. This very true idea is supremely well rendered. All the remainder is pretty weak. I hope soon to have a letter from him."

'I have one from him to M. Haller with the reply. The public, Sire, enjoyed the latter hugely.'

"Give them to me; let me read them both."

The King read Voltaire's letter attentively, but he read Haller's as he usually read what he did not wish to approve, that is to say, in a disjointed manner, severing the phrases, paying no attention to the commas and full-stops. I judged from this reading that he would say the reply was a bad one, and I judged wrong.

"What a fine reply, and what good lessons he gives the fellow. He cries out aloud when some one or other inveighs against religion, and he himself has vomited horrors against it. What wheedling there is in his letter! Ah, my dear sir, it is a great pity that so fine a genius should have so abominable a character. You perhaps know that one day he offered his heart to Crébillon, or to Piron, I think. 'Fie,' replied the latter, 'you offer me the worst part of yourself.' Apropos of my man, do you know how he wrote his *Jugement sur les savans* while with me? The bookseller who was printing *L'Essai sur la Vie de Louis XIV.* complained bitterly because the second volume was not so lengthy as the first. Voltaire tried to evade his complaints. 'This bookselling riff-raff is never pleased; it is always trying to cheat



poor authors.' The bookseller, knowing doubtless by experience that a certain author was somewhat of a cheat also, insisted that the second volume must be longer. Then my Voltaire hastily wrote his *Jugement*, and wrote what he knew and what he did not know. But, my dear sir, I think it is late, good evening and good night." It was ten o'clock.

The King sent for me at five o'clock in the afternoon.

"You kept me yesterday a pretty long time. Do you know that it was ten o'clock. To-day, I shall have my watch on the table, for I must start out very early to-morrow for Freiberg. I am going to reinforce Hülsen, and make arrangements with him for the safety of my troops. In a few days I shall return; I hope to find you well. I leave you among frightened people, who will paint our present situation to you in black. It is not of the best, it is true, but it is not desperate. Thus, my dear sir, take my word for it, and appreciate with your good sense the fears, the declamations and the criticisms. There has been not a little of the latter done since our unfortunate adventure, and there will be still more done."

He passed from this to the question of the best of worlds, which was not, he said, the one which we inhabit, and to the immateriality of the soul. As all this might have led far, and we had already discussed this question so often without agreeing, I let him go on without saying a word.

This 29th  
November,  
1759, at  
Wilsdruf.

“ I see well, my dear sir, that you have no wish to acquire clear and precise ideas on these points, so that you will not have to change your opinions ; so I leave you to your orthodoxy, begging you to permit me to tell you that, when I am destroyed, I am very certain that nothing will trouble me any more ; and you, like a loyal Calvinist, imagine pleasures and pains after you are no more on this planet on which we languish and suffer ; but as I speak to you in vain, I wish you a good night, until I have the pleasure of seeing you again here on the 3rd or 4th. Adieu.”

This 3rd  
December,  
1759, at  
Wilsdruf.

The King, who had returned in the morning, sent for me at six o'clock.

“ I have done a good deal of work, my friend, during the two days I have been absent. I found an admirable position for the troops which must remain there. Follow me on my map : the Mulde, which flows between rocks, covers the front of the army. This river can only be crossed by three stone bridges, behind which I have stationed a large force of infantry to defend them ; and so that nothing shall be lacking to give the enemy a good reception, the bridges themselves will be loaded with wood mixed with combustible materials. You see, my dear sir, that I have thought of everything. I have also provided for the safety of Torgau ; I fear nothing on that side ; and you will see that I shall again extricate myself from all this better than I might have imagined. Perhaps even I shall be able to attack, and with this in

view I have begged Prince Ferdinand to send me some help with the Crown Prince. Reinforced by these Hanoverian troops and my nephew, I shall attack if it is humanly possible."

On this occasion, he sang me the praises of the Crown Prince.

"He combines with an excellent heart and a delightful civility every possible ability, the greatest valour, and the widest views. Do not think, my dear sir, that the strong attachment I have for him blinds me about him. I am describing him to you just as he is. All those who know him see him in the same light as I do, and you will judge of him yourself when you have the advantage of seeing and hearing him.

"Well, my friend, what have you been doing during my absence?"

'I have been reading and writing, Sire.'

"Were you very much deafened with declamations?"

'I heard none. Although it is felt that Your Majesty's position is not of the best, it is agreed that you have done a great deal to make it tolerable, and it is hoped that you will make good all previous misfortunes, and that you will force your enemies willy-nilly to make peace.'

"Oh, for once, they do me too much honour, and are going to work a little too quick; for the rest, heaven grant that they are right. What did your Calvin, with whom I left you on the eve of my departure, tell you?"

‘Nothing, Sire ; I did not give him a thought. I have my principles ; I hold to them, and I only read very rarely anything that is controversial.’

“Well, my dear sir, I have done better than you ; I am more orthodox in religion than you are. Know then that during the few moments’ rest I had at Freiberg, I read a sermon by Saurin : *What shall I do for thee, Ephraim? thy piety is like the dew of morning* ; this sermon is supremely well written.”

‘This is exemplary, Sire. I still think, as I have had the honour of telling Your Majesty, that you will one day be, if not devout, at least a firm believer.’

“You are jesting, my friend.”

‘No, Sire, I am not jesting. Belief will come to you when you are not expecting it. One moment of calm, of loathing, of reverse may make of Your Majesty a model of devotion.’

He laughed a good deal at my idea.

“Do you know, my dear sir, *almost you persuade me to be a Christian?*”

As he had quoted this passage to me, I replied :

‘Would to heaven that it were almost, or rather that it were quite.’

“It will come one of these days, since you hold firm to your ideas ; but, my dear sir, apropos of the sermon I read, should not all preachers devote themselves to preaching morals only, and to preaching them as well as Saurin does ? Instead of morals, my pedants talk to you of dogmas and

of mysteries which you cannot understand, and keep to themselves that divine morality which cannot be too often impressed on men. Should they not make terrible descriptions of hell to frighten wholesomely? When Massillon thundered his sermon on the road to Christ, was not all his congregation frightened, and how many of his hearers did not on that day renounce for ever the century and its lusts? Read, my dear sir, this admirable sermon, which is to be found in his *Petit Carême*.”

‘I have read it, Sire, and have admired it, as you do.’

“Do you know why in general we have such poor preachers? It is because usually people are destined to it who have no real calling for this honourable function; it is because they do not study properly, because they do not fill their minds by reading your Holy Scriptures; it is because they do not make this reading their principal business; and, finally, it is because those persons who are destined for the Church do not see the good world, do not study men enough and the passions which agitate them. A thoughtful course of reading can put you in the way of this knowledge of the world; but the world must be seen as it is, and your reading checked by the observations you have made from your own experience. If I liked, my friend, I could compose a whole treatise on this subject. Perhaps one of these days, while re-reading my Saurin, who pleases me, and while

full of the fine images he puts before you, I will write a dissertation on preachers and preaching which will probably astonish you. But with my preachings, tell me, I beg you, what the time is ? ”

‘ Nearly eleven o’clock, Sire.’

“ Nearly eleven o’clock ! This is too much, my friend ; you are an enchanter.”

The enchanter had, however, said but very little during this sitting.

“ With you, I must always have my watch on the table ; you will not catch me at it again.”

I was delighted with these long talks ; they meant that the King was not so sad as formerly, and it was much not to be always dwelling on that fatal story of Maxen.

“ Good evening, good evening, another time do not let me forget myself as you have done this time. It was Calvin who brought on my chatter. Adieu.”

4th Decem-  
ber, 1759,  
at Wilsdruf.

Going to the camp in the morning to see Count de Henckel, whom I liked for his abilities, his bravery, and his Roman love of his country, I met some officers of my acquaintance who informed me in their manner of a new misfortune.

‘ It was thought that General Beck was marching to Torgau, and here he has surrounded General Diericke stationed near Meissen on the right bank of the river, and is bombarding him. This brave man, having his communication bridge over the Elbe no longer, is taking all of his corps that he

can across on some old boats, but as they did not have the wit to bring together a large number when they were obliged to take away the bridge on account of the ice, you will see that the greater part of his corps will be taken. It is very strange that this blow, which was foreseen and feared, and of which there was news, was not countered. This general is a brave and gallant man ; in his present serious position he will certainly do everything that it is possible to do ; he would not have been taken at Maxen.'

'But are you sure of this news you inform me of ?'

'Very sure ; you will hear to-morrow that this corps has been taken.'

I was distressed by what I heard, and, instead of going to see the count, I returned on my steps, to be within reach of His Majesty in case he should send for me ; and I did well, for an hour afterwards I received orders to go to him.

"You see me always in ever-fresh anxieties, and always exposed to losses. Here is Diericke lost, and lost only by the greatest fatality in the world ; I have to suffer such blows from this treacherous fortune : a frost comes on, and they are obliged to take away a bridge that I had had constructed, and there are only a very few boats to go to his aid with. I am certain that he will save all he can, for he is bravery itself. He will certainly not lose his head, as they lost their heads so barbarously at Maxen. Ah, my dear sir, I

have said to you, and I shall never tire of saying to you, happy is he who lives quietly and satisfied with a small fortune. Is not my fate deplorable? I come off rather well with the Russians; I return to a promising situation, and it all vanishes in the most disastrous fashion. Ah, fortune, how you make a sport of weak mortals! Do me the pleasure, Catt, of returning this afternoon at four o'clock."

I arrived; as the King was asking me whether I had learned anything, an officer was announced who brought a letter.

"Let him enter. I feel that it will certainly be bad news."

It was only a report from General Hülsen. The King replied to it immediately, and dismissed the officer.

"You see what a diabolical position mine is. If the door is opened or a letter is brought to me, all my blood starts galloping to my head, and, at those moments, I am fit for nothing. The more I reflect on this diabolical life, the more I think my plan of retirement admirable. This plan mitigates my troubles. To live in peace with honest and enlightened men, what a pleasure, my friend! If Voltaire came to see me in my peaceful retreat (and he would seldom come), I should stop him from indulging in those annoyances which I detest. There will be no vanity with me, no pride, no ambition, no stools, every one would have his armchair; what do you say to all this?"



‘That I think it admirable, Sire, but this fine plan will never be realised.’

“Why never? Do you think me incapable of a firm and generous resolution. Do you find a delicious pleasure in the dog of a life which I lead?”

‘I think your present life, Sire, is very deplorable, and it affects me; it gives me great pain. I think Your Majesty very capable of vigorous resolution. You have given a thousand proofs of it, as well as of an astonishing firmness; but, Sire, supposing you carry off some brilliant successes, supposing that, in beating all the ‘hats,’ whoever they are, you see your way to making an advantageous peace, will not these successes influence the resolution you are making to quit a throne which you will have assured by so much painful labour with your troops?’

“Certainly, my dear sir, you could lead me very far; but it is precisely this which would be pleasant, after having assured the destiny of the State, to live for myself, and can a man live for himself, when he has a heavy burden to bear? Do not imagine that everything is rose-coloured; even in the greatest prosperity of a reign, the thorns grow on all sides.”

Who knows where this conversation would have led, or, if you will, this little comedy, if an aide-de-camp who had been sent to Meissen and had returned had not been announced. The King dismissed me, telling me to send in his aide-de-

camp; and so I could not know whether he was the bearer of good or bad news. I awaited him for half an hour, but the King kept him a very long time, which seemed to me a bad sign.

5th Decem-  
ber, 1759,  
at Wilsdruf.

On rising, I learned from an officer who came to take coffee with me, that General Diericke had got his cavalry and some of the troops across at Meissen, but that, having tried in the night to cross himself, he had been taken prisoner with the rest of his corps; the losses amounted to 1400 men, and a fairly large number who would not surrender jumped into the river and were drowned.

‘That makes another unfortunate affair,’ he said to me. ‘Good heavens, how I pity our good King, how upset he will be by this adventure!’

These depressing adventures, coming one on top of the other, distressed me sorely, and made me fear for the health of the King; how could he bear up under such repeated reverses! Up to the moment when I was sent for by the King, at five in the evening, I brooded continually over these mournful ideas, and, when I saw him, they became still worse.

“Another accursed stroke of fortune, my friend. She does not tire of persecuting me; but I also shall not tire of holding out against her, for this is beyond a joke. Here am I again in a frightful mess, just as much as it is possible to be in one. What a number of misfortunes! And how greatly I stand in need of philosophy in my situation and of conversation with people who can sympathise a

little with the adversities of others ! If, moreover, I appear to you to-day a little more tranquil than usual (and he also spoke more tranquilly than he had done during the past few days), make no mistake about it, my friend ; it is the impotent effort of a proud unfortunate who pretends to be contented.

La mort est l'espoir le seul bien qui me reste.<sup>1</sup>

“ Diericke at least defended himself like a brave man. He did not surrender with dishonour, as my jackanapes did at Maxen. Although I have lost three battalions, the honour of my arms is not lost, and that mitigates the disaster, which I will make amends for ; but there is no setting the blow right in public opinion. The animal [Finck] wrote to me to congratulate me on the fact that the enemy was marching into Bohemia, and he was not aware that this enemy was marching to turn him, and make him lay down his arms with a cowardice of which there is no other example.”

I was tempted to remind the King of that large body of troops taken after the battle of Hochstaedt in the village of Blenheim, but reflecting that he would indulge in fresh outbursts against this unfortunate general who had been sent away under orders, and who, after all, was destroyed through overboldness, I stopped myself in time, and spoke to him of things which I thought might

<sup>1</sup> [A misquotation ; the line is ‘ La mort est le seul bien, le seul dieu qui me reste ’—‘ death is the only good, the only god remaining to me ’ (Voltaire, *Œdipe*, v. 6).]

take him off those subjects that affected him so much. As he felt every morning the twinges of a vague kind of gout, I begged him to explain to me what this accursed gout was. My ruse was successful ; the King spoke to me for a good hour of the gout, of what caused it, and of the treatment for it. He laughed at the specifics for preventing gout and for making its return less frequent. During this dissertation, there was no further question of Maxen, and this was so much gained on the melancholy mood.

“ But I must not talk too much now ; I have to start to-morrow for Freiberg, and I am going to try whether Morpheus will have anything to do with me.”

‘ Shall I have the honour of following you ? ’

“ No, my friend, this cannot be for the moment. I have a thousand arrangements to make for my army. I have several journeys to make in order to inspect all my positions. Amid all this worry, I could not take advantage of your services. As soon as I have attended to the most urgent, I will send for you. Try to amuse yourself, if it is possible, and don't allow yourself to be deafened by the thousand and one complaints that will be made about our misfortunes. Trust in what I tell you ; nothing is yet desperate ; a little firmness and a good heart will restore everything. I pity my poor troops, who will have to suffer a great deal this winter, which is beginning harshly. Be well and pray for me.”

The King started on this day at five o'clock in the morning. Would you imagine that most of those who saw him enter his carriage augured ill of the fact that he had to wait a few moments, because some straps had come unfastened and a part of the harness had not been properly put on? So true it is that fear and misfortune make superstitious those who have no fixed ideas on what they see.

6th Decem-  
ber, 1759.  
The King  
goes again to  
Freiberg.

His Majesty took with him the bodyguards, the *gens d'armes*, Seydlitz's regiment and six battalions. The Margrave Charles and Lieutenant-General de Wedell had command of the troops of the army of Wilsdruf, which was billeted in the villages nearest the camp. During my stay at Wilsdruf and in the absence of the King, I revised what I had written in this campaign, and the observations I had made. I went fairly frequently to the camp to see my acquaintance, and I never came away from it without emotion. Who would not have been touched, in fact, by the sight of these troops, who had suffered so much, badly encamped and badly housed in the hardest season? The cold was extreme, and these brave people amused themselves outside their tents, and said that they hoped Marshal Daun would take it into his head to come and attack them. Our obstinacy, or rather our inflexibility in holding out against the rigours of the cold, forced the enemy to act likewise. The tents remained pitched; each day six battalions guarded the camp; and each day they were relieved by others.

In the evening I saw those who had remained at Wilsdruf, and what interested me was that, instead of the complaints to which they were rather inclined, they sought in every possible way, if not to justify the King entirely regarding the corps sent to Maxen, at least to lay stress on the reasons which compelled him to drive the Austrians away from Dresden and Saxony by means of strong detachments, supported, moreover, by the whole army. As it was to be feared, they said, that General Beck might proceed to Torgau, to burn the bridge there, should he be unable to take possession of the town, or to push on to Berlin, since he knew all that was there for the army, the King countered cleverly, with the expeditions he had sent off, all there was to be feared in these directions.

Speaking of the battles of Kolin and Kunersdorf, a well-informed officer, well up generally in all that happened, told me that in this first battle, His Majesty took his first battalion of guards in order to gain an idea of what a battle won was like, and that he was extremely grieved when he learned that this fine battalion, which had been engaged and had fought with great valour, had been almost entirely destroyed. He told me next that, at the Kunersdorf affair, when M. de Bülow, a very clever officer, arrived there in order to inform His Majesty of the victory which Prince Ferdinand, whose aide-de-camp he was, had carried off against the French on the 1st August, His Majesty begged him to see this battle, so that he

might be able to tell his Prince how he had beaten the Russians. The aide-de-camp was wounded, and had, moreover, the grief of announcing very bad news.

The same officer assured me that the story I had heard of a general who had asked a bookseller for maps was true, and that he was annoyed at the question which was put to him : ‘ Do you require individual maps or general maps ? ’—‘ What do you mean ? I am a general, and I must therefore have general maps.’

‘ I would not have believed it,’ the officer told me, ‘ if I had not heard it with my own ears.’

One evening, talking with this same officer, I questioned him about the battle of Prague, and once more on the battle of Kolin.

‘ As for the first,’ he said, ‘ I read in the tablets of Marshal Schwerin, campaign of 1757, that he did not want this battle. “ You must go straight for the military stores of Königgrätz, thence into Moravia, march to Neustadt and there sign peace. If you give battle and it is favourable to us, part of the beaten troops will escape into Prague, which it will be necessary to blockade thoroughly. If the enemy tries to leave the town, we shall fall on him, and send the cavalry on in front to burn the villages on his way, and in this way all will be ended.” When the King, arriving before Prague, said to the Marshal that these positions must be attacked, “ Sire,” said the Marshal, “ I do not think this battle is necessary ; besides, I know the

ground, which is very difficult.”—“Come, come,” said the King, “we will drive off this riff-raff.”—“Your Majesty absolutely wishes us to attack them, then? Good, forward.” He attacked with 24 battalions, which were repulsed; sword in hand, he placed himself at the head of his regiment; he was killed, wrapped round with a flag which he had seized and which served him as a pall. Thus perished this great man, whose like the King will have difficulty in finding. As for the battle of Kolin, you are doubtless aware of the reasons why it was lost, and how unfortunately the King learned on that day that he was not invincible, as he believed he was; but you do not perhaps know several anecdotes which you will be pleased to hear.

‘Grant (I knew him as a general, a very gallant man and very able) went to one of the aides-de-camp of Prince Henry to inform him of this sad defeat. The aide-de-camp reported it to the Prince, who sobbed at the account of this loss. The Prince went to see his brother Ferdinand, who also wept a great deal; everybody was in tears. Orders were given to assemble to discuss the retreat. Prince Ferdinand did not say a word, and could only weep. “This is not the time for weeping; we must come to some decision, and this is what must be done.” At this moment the King arrived. The Prince went up to him; the King took him by the hand, pressed it, and saying, “Ah, my brother,” passed on, and went to his tent. The Prince



followed him; they were very much moved; he said: "Brother, we must draw up a plan of retreat."—"I am incapable of doing so at present," said the King, "leave it till to-morrow."—"Brother, this thing is serious; it is urgent; to-morrow will perhaps be too late."—"Well, brother, do it yourself."—"Here it is, Sire."—"It is sure to be good," said the King. On the following day, the Prince's aide-de-camp was announced to the King; he entered. "Sire, the Prince asks whether, in starting off, it would not be well to strike up a march and to fly the colours."—"Yes," said the King, "let my brother do what he will, it will be well done." They started off as the Prince had desired; Marshal Keith was violently attacked; he was cannonaded in his tents, but he got through.'

'Are you sure of all that you are telling me?'

'As sure as it is possible to be!'

As my friend seemed to me pretty well informed of what was done and the King had spoken to me of him as an able officer, I asked him about the battle of Kunersdorf at which he had been present.

'Do me the kindness,' I said to him, 'to tell me all you know and saw of this battle.'

'Willingly,' he said, and this is how he described it to me.

'The King, who had foreseen all the misfortunes which were about to happen, as you know, sent for his brother, Prince Henry, to join up his corps with Wedell's, which had been beaten. The Prince took

command of the army which the King had left in Silesia. The King attacked Haddick *en route*, and was mistaken about Loudon, who gained a march on him. His Majesty had every possible reason to risk a battle ; in spite of all that has been said about his being in too great a hurry to fight, he had not a moment to lose. He attacked the Russians, who were masters of Frankfort, and who had taken up such a position that their right rested on the Jews' cemetery ; a marshy brook flowed on their right ; in their centre they had hills and half a mile away the village of Kunersdorf. The King took advantage of a mistake they had made in having no abattis on their right. He sent Finck's corps forward on the hills of Reitwein. While he was turning them, he formed up under cover of the brushwood. Then battle was engaged by a frightful cannonade. Finck's cannons swept their line ; everything was driven back ; the enemy batteries were captured ; everything was as could be wished ; we were already at three hundred paces from the Jews' cemetery when all of a sudden, the cry was heard : Cavalry, cavalry. The cavalry advanced, attacked without the King's orders ; the enemy's cavalry had not yet appeared, our cavalry attacking entrenchments and repulsed by a terrible fire of canister ; it fled, and, in doing so, upset the infantry, which, being shaken to pieces, also fled. Loudon took advantage of this disorder, advanced, and finished the affair. If our cavalry, after the infantry had recovered and had recom-

menced the attack, had been able to hold out for half an hour only, the battle would have certainly been won, and it would have been all up with the Russians and the help of the Austrians. They took 4000 of us prisoners, 176 pieces of our cannon ; we lost 12,000 men both killed and wounded, the latter slightly. His Majesty, at the end of this unfortunate affair, retired with six battalions, and covered the capital with them. If the enemy had known how to act, it was all over with our great King ; but the greatest evil, like the greatest good, never happens. There is nothing finer and more instructive than the operations of the King after the loss of this battle. His manœuvres to recover and drive off the Russians are a masterpiece of military art. Ah, my friend, if by too much precipitation he had not, on arriving in Saxony, lost the fruits of these fine operations along the Oder, what a fine end to the campaign ! And what glory for him, even after having lost to the Russians !

‘ His too great confidence, his too great contempt for an enemy who, after all, is not at all to be despised, destroyed him, and I confess to you that I do not yet see how he will be able to extricate himself from all this, in spite of the resources of his wonderful genius.’

In this way I passed several of my evenings with this friend and with other acquaintances, talking with them on a host of subjects to which I may yet return again, when, at ten o’clock in the

evening of the 18th, I received orders from the King to go and join him at Freiberg.

18th Decem-  
ber, 1759, at  
Freiberg.

I arrived at two o'clock in the afternoon, prostrated with the cold, which was extreme. The officer on guard said to me as I entered: 'His Majesty has commanded that the moment you arrive you are to go to him.' I went.

"Ah, good day, my dear sir, I am delighted to see you again."

After several gracious questions on my health, he asked me how I had passed my time, and in what condition I had left the minds of those in the place I had just come from.

'I read, Sire, I wrote; I sometimes went to the camp, which is buried in snow, and the minds of your people are filled with zeal for Your Majesty, and full of confidence in you.'

"My poor soldiers, how I pity them! Those here are not much better off, I assure you. I very much fear that both there and here they will have to suffer a great deal and for a long time from this harsh cold. What worries I have had, my friend, since I last had the pleasure of seeing you, what letters scrawled and arrangements made for the army, what a number of things to foresee,—it is beyond all jesting. In spite of all that, I seized on a few moments to compose a dissertation on the subject I spoke to you about at Freiberg. Here is my *moorsel*; it is not very long; I will read it to you: *Plan of instruction for those who are destined for the ecclesiastical state.*"

This is what I have been able to remember of this piece from this one reading.<sup>1</sup> He began by laying down that the Jesuits understood better than all others the education of the youth entrusted to them, that their method of watching over and observing these young people, of seizing upon what they might be capable of, so that they could be developed in the direction in which they showed ability, was a method of education which could not be too highly praised and recommended ; that, this being so, those who are charged with the surveillance of schools should recommend this method, should demand it of the masters, and should require them to give a summary of the observations they have made on their pupils, both as regards their character and the turn of their mind. When the master has decided, he said, that such and such boys are fitted for the ecclesiastical state, he should exhort them to fill their minds with the contents of the Bible, point out to them that this should be their favourite reading, that they should return to it continually in order to seize all its beauty, its spirit, and to learn to explain and reconcile the Holy Scriptures with themselves. They should be well instructed in

<sup>1</sup> This piece was burned, as well as another on the method of studying the ancients and the moderns of which I shall speak, on the same evening that the fire consumed the first draft of the Memoirs of My Times. All these manuscripts were on a table, with the exception of a notebook of these memoirs which the King had fortunately knocked on to the floor when rising from his table to sit down to supper ; the fire being caused by a candle which fell over on the table, without its being perceived by the lackey.

Bible criticism, and often given subjects for exercise, and their method of treating these subjects should be compared with that of the clever masters who have treated the same subjects ; but great care should be taken that these subjects are taken from moral themes rather than from dogma. Morals, he said, are the whole of man ; to love God and your neighbour with all your heart is the summary of all law ; but to treat the subject of morals well, to treat it in a useful manner, to present all the determining motives, to make the liveliest impressions, to agitate and confound, you must observe and study yourself carefully, and also observe and study the world. For this purpose, the world must be thoroughly well seen ; the books that speak of it are not enough ; to them must be added the book of the world. In the latter, men are seen as they are ; in books, they are seen, not as they are, but as they should be. Directors of studies might give to their pupils rules for observing the world properly, but how can they give these ? They are usually people who have seen and known only their study. All that is needed to see the world properly is a little good sense, and this rule, that to see it properly, you must see and hear, but speak little. The best authors of antiquity must be read and re-read, and the sermons of the best preachers of all religions, and those famous passages which have carried away a congregation must be often pointed out. Finally, he quoted a fairly large number of

passages from Saurin, Bossuet, Fléchier, Mascaron, Bourdaloue, Massillon and St. Chrysostom, saying in a few words why these passages had deserved the approbation given to them.

No doubt I give the summary of this piece pretty badly; the King read it rather rapidly. If I speak of it at all, it is to show how this Prince took advantage of every moment to compose some piece on subjects which came into his mind and which he did not lose sight of.

Singularly surprised that he had quoted passages from St. Chrysostom, I asked him whether he had bought this great saint here.

“Bought?” he said; “I am sure that they do not even know the name of the good man here. What I have quoted from him in my theologi-comic piece is a commemoration, excuse this fine big word, of my reading in my happy Rheinsberg.”

‘At Rheinsberg, Sire?’

“Yes, there, and indeed there, and I have not seen him since, as you may imagine.”

‘What a good and a retentive memory, Sire!’

“It is because I exercised it well in my youth, and when you read with that tranquillity and gaiety of soul, which, alas! I then enjoyed, you never forget anything of what you read. At the present moment, I should not say as much, my friend; I am losing this faculty little by little, and who knows, if this life continues, whether I shall preserve even my ordinary good sense.”

‘It does not appear that Your Majesty is losing his memory ; as for the good sense, you will never lose it.’

“Don’t be so sure of that, my dear sir. With the life I am leading, with the troubles that press in on me on all sides, you can be sure of nothing ; but, my dear sir, I am keeping you too long. You perhaps have not dined. What time is it ?”

‘Past five o’clock.’

“This is too bad ; go and rest, my dear sir. To-morrow, I will show you what else I have been working at. I think that you will be pleased with what I have done, in view of my dog of a situation. Good evening and good night.”

19th Decem-  
ber, 1759, at  
Freiberg.

I was called at five o’clock in the evening. This hour was fixed until the 29th, when His Majesty proceeded to Pretzschendorf, with a view to making an attempt on the Austrians, aided by the Crown Prince, who was to arrive in the town towards the end of the month.

During these ten days, His Majesty was busy in the morning with his military affairs, and gave all the afternoon to letters, but the time he gave to them was often interrupted by reports, which came in very frequently.

He read me an epistle to his sister Amelia on chance.

“It is my favourite piece ; I have been working at it for a long time ; I want it to lack in nothing, and to have if possible that mellowness of Racine. You will think this a little vain, my dear sir, but



in setting yourself a great model, you must not despair of coming up to it."

He next read me several times on this same evening the verses he had written immediately after the fatal affair at Maxen.

"My friend, honour, whose proud maxims I have followed, has perhaps led me into many traps, but

Trop peu fait pour goûter un remède timide,  
 J'ai su lui préférer un conseil généreux :  
 Suivant ce principe pour guide,  
 Il me semblait moins odieux,  
 S'il fallait être malheureux  
 Sous le bras qui me persécute,  
 Qu'une audace intrépide a signalé ma chute,<sup>1</sup>  
 Que de brûler à petit feu."

During one of my sittings, he read me the epistle to his sister of Baireuth, which he had already corrected at Breslau in the year 1758, and that to my Lord Marischal, which he had touched up again with some care during the time of my absence. After having read these two pieces to me, he spoke to me of those who formed the subjects of them.

"The deaths of my beloved sister and of my brave Marshal are always present in my mind, which is afflicted by these two losses and affected by so many reverses ; this sister whom I worshipped

<sup>1</sup> I pointed out a slip here which was not corrected. ['Not being made to appreciate a timid remedy, I preferred to it a generous counsel ; following this principle for guide, it seemed to me less odious, if I must be unhappy beneath the arm that persecutes me, that a bold audacity should mark my downfall than to burn with a slow fire.' The slip is in the penultimate—*eût signalé ma chute.*]

and who was a friend such as are no longer found, this worthy Keith, who would have been so useful, both are lost to me, my friend. The Marshal combined a great deal of affection and zeal for my person with great integrity and affability in his familiar intercourse. Equally fitted for politics and war, he would have shone at the head of armies and in the cabinet of kings."

In this way the King repeated to me what he had already said to me about Marshal Keith. I had the good fortune to see this clever man many times; when our conversations turned on the King, he spoke of him to me with the greatest enthusiasm. It is very certain that a great man cannot be properly appreciated except by a great man; they understand each other reciprocally; they perceive the reasons for each other's steps, and the consequences which must result, unless unexpected accidents upset what they have planned. I was therefore never surprised to find that the large majority of officers only saw in Marshal Keith a great deal of good nature.

The King, during this short stay of his at Freiberg, besides the composition and the correction of his pieces of which I have just spoken, read all the orations of Cicero and two volumes of the letters to Atticus. Sometimes he spoke to me for an hour of the former work, giving me a short account of the orations which interested him most: the Marcellus, the Archias, the Milo and the Catiline orations.

“You see,” he always said to me, “how well I know my Cicero. There are many professional *magister* [sic] who do not know him better than I, and who do not perhaps understand so well his spirit and his beauties.”

On the eve of his departure I was called at three o'clock. As I had gone to him every other day at five, this change of hour made me fear that something unfortunate had happened, for I also was beginning to fear for many things, since I was each moment witness of fears for what had happened, and for what might still happen. I was not altogether mistaken. I found the King sitting in his large chair, wrapped round with his cloak.

This 28th  
December,  
1759, at  
Freiberg.

“My friend, things are not going well; I have twinges of gout and I absolutely must start off to-morrow.”

‘But, Sire, for the love of God, why expose yourself to a bad attack which will prevent you from moving, and which will not permit you even to give orders?’

“Come, come, my friend, I shall move, and I shall give orders. Would you, in present circumstances, have me nurse myself up like our Marquis?”

‘I do not say, Sire, that you should nurse yourself like the Marquis, you will never come to that; but I beg Your Majesty to put off your departure, for, if you once really get the gout, what will you do in a village?’

“Just as I should in a town: I should be

feverish ; I should suffer ; I should cry out sometimes ; my paws would swell, and, after all this, I should be just like you. I am going to bed, and to perspire, and, unless fate says nay, to-morrow morning at five o'clock I shall be a long way from here. Good evening ; be assured that he who nurses himself the most, also suffers the most, and, if you write to the Marquis, tell him this good maxim, pointing out to him how I am. Good evening again ; amuse yourself if you can ; that is the best thing you can do. If I am enabled to carry off the stroke I have in mind, I shall very quickly return here ; if not, I may perhaps send for you to come to where I am going to-morrow. Good evening."

I was very uneasy about the King's health when I left him, but having inquired early in the morning how the King was, I was told that he was playing the flute, while waiting for his carriage, that he had perspired amazingly during the night, and that he complained of nothing. He arrived before noon at Pretzschendorf, having left behind the Mulde the troops of the Crown Prince to defend his rear. He marched to Dippoldiswalde with his own troops ; he drove off all the detachments of the enemy from the sides of the Wilde-Weisseritz, from Frauenberg and from Pretzschendorf, where he billeted his troops. An attack on Dippoldiswalde was considered impracticable, because, on the movements made by the King, Marshal Daun had sent considerable reinforcements there, and

This 29th  
December,  
1759, at  
Pretzschendorf.

because the only road which could have been taken in order to turn General Maguire, who commanded at Dippoldiswalde, was unapproachable, by reason of the fact that this general had been careful to place a large number of battalions at the defile which would have to be passed in order to reach the height.

This is what we learned at Freiberg, where there was a great deal of anxiety regarding the blow which it was known that the King wished to deal the enemy. Provided, they said, before they had news of his march, provided that he undertakes nothing with precipitation, provided that he does not go and repeat the deplorable scene of Maxen; for he is nettled, and if he sees the slightest chance of attacking, he will do so, and the resentment which he feels at the affront he has suffered will make the impossible even seem possible to him. Thus spoke nearly everybody; but when they learned that the King, in view of the harshness of the season and of the impossibility of transferring infantry and cannon over the roads, which were all choked with snow, and by which the enemy must be attacked, had determined to remain at Pretzschendorf in order to carry off all the forage of the countryside and to consume all the food, then all those who had so much feared and so much doubted the prudence of the King in these delicate circumstances, praised to the skies his prudence, his tranquillity, and his generous resolution to sacrifice his resentment to the well-being of his

troops, as if the King would have ever had the idea of sacrificing his brave troops for the pleasure of losing them. These judgments on the King, sometimes favourable and at others unfavourable, appeared to me to be usually very precipitate judgments. More often than not, their authors really did not know what they wanted or what they did not want, what could be feared or hoped.

I said to several of my acquaintances, after having heard what they had to say : ‘ Be easy in your minds, I implore you. The King is much too affected by the misfortunes he has suffered, he sees too clearly all the difficulties he will have to overcome, to be willing to expose himself to still greater misfortunes. He told me at Wilsdruf, and he repeated it to me here : the slightest misfortune that happens to me, the least check I may suffer, and all will be up with me, my dear sir, and I shall be unable to recover from it.’

This should have calmed their fears a little, if they had not been extremely great ; but all words were useless ; deeds were necessary ; and they had them when they knew, as I have said, that the King had settled down at Pretzschendorf. Would you imagine, however, that these fears reappeared a little, when a messenger arrived rather noisily with orders for me to go immediately to His Majesty ! When the messenger arrived, I was with Sir Andrew Mitchell. ‘ I perceive,’ he said to me, ‘ the reason why he is sending for you. As it is known that the King passes his evenings

8th January,  
1760, at  
Pretzschendorf.

talking with you, he wants it to be believed that his plan is to remain some time longer in that accursed village, where he will infallibly ruin his health, if he prolongs his stay there.' As the knight might indeed have guessed the reason for my call, I told it to my acquaintances, and this reason calmed their minds. I started immediately and at five o'clock in the afternoon I arrived duly frozen at Ober-Pretzschendorf. The King sent for me immediately.

"You find me here, my friend, in an accursed spot. I wanted to attack, but it was impossible. You may be certain that if I had seen the slightest possibility of dealing a blow with any success, I should not have missed the chance; the impracticable ground, the frightful weather, the entrenchments and the batteries of the enemy perched on the summit of the rocks, have all put a great deal of water into my wine. I shall remain here until the 12th, in order to eat all there is to eat, so that the enemy may not be able to maintain in this neighbourhood any large body of troops during the winter. You will pardon me, I am sure, for having taken the great liberty of sending for you here at a time of such harsh cold. I am very pleased to see you again, and, moreover, to speak frankly to you, I wanted to spread the opinion that I might remain here for a long while yet. Have they not been a little afraid at Freiberg?"

'A little, Sire, but their fear was not of long duration.'

“There would have been reason to fear, if I had been obstinate in endeavouring to drive away what I had in front of me. Have you seen my nephew, the Crown Prince ?”

‘No, Sire, as I came here immediately on my arrival, I have not had the honour of paying him my court.’

“See him this evening, when you leave me. I am altogether delighted with him, with his abilities, with the gentleness of his personal intercourse, with his ardour for the army, and with all the wide views he has ; he will surpass us all, however much we may be *old soldiers*. I am not speaking to you in this way because he is my nephew, but because this is the truth itself. All those who see him and who can appreciate worth will certainly hold the same language to you. My nephew has with him an officer of very great merit ; it is that same Bülow who, having brought me news from Prince Ferdinand on the very day I fought the battle of Kunersdorf, was unfortunately wounded there. Adieu, my dear sir, until to-morrow, when we shall have more time together. You will be very pleased to rest after your long and cold ride, but see my nephew nevertheless before taking up your abode in your cottage, which will be more or less like this one.”

I had myself announced to the Prince, who received me with great kindness. I left him, delighted with his interesting conversation, with his civility, which did not humiliate, and with all



that he told me of the King and of his lively affection for him : ‘ I hope that, during my stay at Freiberg, I shall often have the pleasure, sir, of seeing you and talking with you. We will speak of my uncle, whom I worship, of all the fine things he has done, and of what you have seen of this unique man. The best thing that we can wish him is that he may have the life we desire for him ; with the renewal of his health, all will be well.’

I next saw for a moment the aides-de-camp whom His Majesty had taken with him. We spoke of the Prince ; they were united in loading him with praise, and in the opinion that he was much above all that was said and thought of him. ‘ But what do you think of our accursed stay here, and God knows how long we shall still remain here ! You have no idea of all that we have suffered from the cold and from our fears that the King would try to attack ; but God be praised that he found the attack impossible.’

‘ When all the provisions are consumed, gentlemen, we shall leave.’

‘ And on that comfortable idea, I wish you good evening.’

Snow had fallen during the night in such abundance that my servant could not go out in the morning to carry out an errand which I had given him ; we had to wait until some peasants passed by, who swept away the snow that barred the door, and this operation was not finished until nearly nine o’clock. At eleven, I went to head-

9th January  
at Pretz-  
schendorf.

quarters, where I had the honour of again paying my court to the Crown Prince. All those who were at headquarters groaned at having to remain in such a cheerless spot during such deplorable weather.

‘Your complaints, gentlemen,’ I said to them, ‘will not help you in the least. Let us endeavour to amuse ourselves and to pass agreeably the few moments which we still have to spend here.’

I had a notion to write a song on a dance tune which was very popular at Freiberg. I compared the stay at Pretzschendorf with that at Freiberg, and I made allusion to the goings-on of our gentlemen and of some of the belles of the town. This song<sup>1</sup> was a success, and they sang it all day. The Prince, who heard us singing, was of opinion that we did well to enliven our cheerless moments in this way. This trifle sufficed to make the end of our stay bearable.

I was called at five o’clock in the evening.

“What have you to say, my friend, of this beautiful season; don’t you think it delightful?”

‘Very delightful, Sire, there is nothing so pleasant as this snow.’

“Ah, the devil it is; but patience, and in a couple of days we shall be at Freiberg, which is better than here.”

‘To console ourselves, Sire, and to give us this patience which you recommend, I have written a

<sup>1</sup> They did not stop singing it during the whole of the winter quarters and during the whole of the campaign.

little song, which your aides-de-camp and I are singing one against the other.'

"Show it to me."

I showed it.

"This is very good," he said, "and so you can cheer yourselves cheaply. Well, since you communicate your compositions to me, I will also show you what I have done here, not to amuse my aides-de-camp, but to help your obedient servant to pass a time which seemed to him tolerably distressing."

He read me an epistle which he had addressed to the Marquis d'Argens on the latter's having written to him that a man had set himself up as a prophet in Berlin, and that he had a number of followers; this epistle began thus :

On recherche toujours des sciences secrètes.

"Is not that passable in my situation and during this time of frost? If, however, you think it all cold, blame my lack of genius and the snow."

'It is all very passable, Sire, and you need by no means complain of the snow and of your genius.'

"That is flattery, sir, given in a spot where it has certainly never been given before. I have written some other trifles, which I will show you to-morrow. I want to read to you my *Epistle on Chance*, which I have corrected again. I want it to be out of the reach of the criticisms of the d'Olivets, present and future."

‘The great Voltaire,’ I said, ‘has never aspired higher.’

“You mean to say then, my dear sir, that my aspirations are too great?”

‘No, Sire, that is not my idea; I mean that, to do a thing well, you must have great aspirations in connection with it.’

“Although I have scribbled a fair amount, I have also read a good deal here. I have gone thoroughly through Lucretius, the *Nature of the Gods*, the *Tusculan Questions*, and the weighty, although excellent, logic of the Port-Royal gentlemen. I doubt whether any one has ever read so much in this the most cheerless of all possible villages. Have you seen my dear nephew?”

‘Yes, Sire, I paid him my court yesterday and to-day.’

“You could not see him too often. Acknowledge that he is very amiable.”

‘Supremely so, Sire.’

“But his heart, my friend, his military talents, that fine and noble ambition, his valour,—you cannot yet judge of all these. Adieu, my dear sir, I am suffering with colic a little. I shall go to bed; I must not fall ill in this confounded village.”

During the two days that we still remained at Pretzschendorf, His Majesty sent for me for a few moments. He was unwell, and talked very little. He read to me from time to time one of his old poems, written, he said, in those happy moments of peace and quiet life.

“At last, my friend,” he said to me on the eve of our departure, “God be praised we are leaving to-morrow. Although all places are almost equally indifferent to me, since I can find occupation everywhere, I yet confess that I shall be delighted to be at Freiberg. I shall at least be a little more comfortable there. Are you not surprised at my expression ‘comfort,’ which is not like me? But what an amount of business of all kinds awaits me there, my friend, what worries, what a quantity of writing, what cares and, certainly, sorrows await me! However, we shall not lose courage. Adieu, my friend, until to-morrow at Freiberg. Pack yourself up well.”

The joy of all headquarters was extreme when it was known for certain that they were leaving.

The King started early in the morning from Pretzschendorf, and at ten o'clock was at Freiberg. He sent for me at five o'clock in the evening.

12th January, 1760,  
at Freiberg.

“At last, I am somewhat in comfort. You know, however, that I do not run after it too much; yet I am pleased to see myself a little better set up than I have been up to the present. I am lodging here with the burgomaster. He and his wife are worthy people; they offered me on my arrival everything that was in their house. Generally, the Saxons are worthy people, it must be acknowledged. Just imagine, my dear sir, that, notwithstanding all that I extract from them, and this is a large amount, they club together to furnish their king with money. This is a fine and a great

thing, and a prince, confronted with such generosity, should hold up his head and be proud to have them for subjects.”

On my saying to him that Saxony was very much ruined, and that it would be in a desperate condition if the war continued :

“ Yes, it is so, and it will be still more so this year. I have not spared it ; I have been severe, I acknowledge ; but if these people had been quieter, if they had not taken it into their heads to inform the enemy of my business, I should not have demanded so much, I assure you. It is true that they are very unfortunate.

“ See how I have installed myself ; all these here are the books which I shall study thoroughly during my stay here, and here are my materials for scrawling, scribbling, scratching out. As you see, I have cut myself out a good deal of work. I need it all to divert me from importunate thoughts and to invigorate my poor head, which is stuffed with my plans for the next campaign. This will be my principal task during my stay here, and this task will include the raising of my army somehow or other to its strength : no light affair, and enough to occupy one man wholly.

“ Did I not tell you that, in spite of all my disasters, I should retain, with the exception of Dresden and Peenemünde, all the ground which I occupied last winter, and that my situation would not be so deplorable as I had reason to fear after the infamy of that accursed Maxen ?

“Look at the reverses I have suffered during this campaign, my friend. Everything failed me constantly. I have every hope of thoroughly thrashing General de Ville; I march from Lands-hut, and de Ville, informed of my march by some rogues of priests, retires, without my being able to attack him in any way. I expect the consecrated hat to attack me in my camp at Reichhennersdorf, and he leaves me there in peace. I fear that the enemy will march into Lusatia, and he does so. I hope that Dohna will stop the Russians, and he does not stop them, and commits nothing but follies. I send Wedell to retrieve the situation, and he makes a still greater mess of it, and allows himself to be beaten in an unheard-of manner. I march on the Russians, and my finest hopes are cruelly disappointed: I am beaten myself, and the gout attacks me in a cruel way. I return to Saxony with the plan of driving the Austrians from Dresden, and my plan is upset by the most shameful and the most extraordinary manœuvres. I place Diericke near Meissen to attack the rear-guard of the Austrians should they attempt to cross the Elbe, and my brave general, by one of those blows of chance which cannot be foreseen, is himself swept off with several battalions. Was there ever a chain of misfortunes like that, and would it be astonishing, my dear sir, if I succumbed beneath all the blows of the fate that persecutes me? Not one little fortunate event during the whole of this time of tribulation.”

‘But, Sire, during these moments of misfortune, of which you speak, you had some good news—news of the victory won by Prince Ferdinand, of Prince Henry’s fine action at Hoyerswerda, of the taking of Münster and Quebec, and of the gaining of the battle of La Vilaine.’

“That is something, and would have been still more, my friend, if I, poor devil, had been able to carry off some success or other. Believe me, a fatality drives us on to fortune or misfortune, whether we will it or not. In spite of all the plans devised by our prudence and our wisdom, you might say that its aim is to convince us that our reason is only a brute beast. You can see the traces of this fatality in an incident which I recall. The wife of General de Polentz left her residence one day, and after having gone a quarter of a mile saw it set on fire by a thunderbolt, which reduced it to ashes. She learned that elsewhere the lightning had killed one of her daughters, and a few days later the only daughter that remained perished in as tragical a manner. Is this not the story of Job, my dear sir? And as regards this fatality I speak of, which leads us on and every event with us, what is the name you give it?”

‘I name it providence, Sire. I remember that one day at Breslau, when you were speaking to me of the Hochkirchen affair, and how the event was often contrary to our best-laid plans, Your Majesty told me that a wise providence directs everything, and that, if this providence were not admitted,



it would be impossible to argue about anything at all, and we should be involved in a host of absurdities, each more stupid than the rest.'

The King at these words said :

"I think it is late ; we both of us need rest. Good evening. Until to-morrow."

Such was my first sitting at Freiberg. I do not propose to give an account of all those that followed, unless incidents present themselves which might serve to show the King's way of thinking. I will restrict myself to describing his manifold occupations, and the most interesting things that happened during his stay in this town.

Up every day at six o'clock, he read his letters, and dictated to his secretaries the replies which they were to send. He next talked with several officers, and gave them his orders for the army ; this usually lasted until nine o'clock. At that hour he would play his flute, and, while playing, he often told me, his mind was busy with his military and political affairs. At ten o'clock, he wrote some more of his short pieces, or corrected old ones. Having finished this work at half-past eleven, he gave a few more orders, and, at mid-day, he sat down to table. At half-past one, the dinner was over. He very rarely, during these quarters, indulged in those sittings at table which he loved so much when he was happy and undisturbed. Towards two o'clock, he resumed his writing until four, when he read until five o'clock, and then sent for me. I had the honour of hearing him until

seven o'clock ; sometimes he spoke to me of literature, sometimes of metaphysics and religion, sometimes telling me stories ; he talked to me of his affairs, of his future, of his affections, and fairly frequently of his officers and the men of letters who had been in his service. At seven o'clock, sometimes at eight, according to his inclination to talk, he read until ten o'clock, and if, instead of reading, he began writing, it often happened that he did not finish until eleven or midnight. The King disposed of his time in this way, and employed it exactly as I have just said. He left his apartments once only, and this was to go to Wilsdruf, whither he went (towards the end of January) on an advice which he had been given that the enemy was preparing to attack the Prince, his brother. This pretended attack did not take place, and the King returned on the second day after his departure.

Winter  
quarters at  
Freiberg.

The King who, on his second journey from Wilsdruf to Freiberg, had corrected his *Epistle on Chance*, addressed to Princess Amelia, a piece which had been written for some time, corrected it again at Ober-Pretzschendorf, and he gave the last touches to it here.<sup>1</sup> He was exceedingly interested in this epistle.

“ Voltaire will certainly consider it to be full of truth, and of thoughts which are vigorous, and, I think, rather well rendered.”

After the correction of this piece, the King went on

<sup>1</sup> In the edition of the *Posthumous Works*, the date of this piece has been given as : At Ober-Pretzschendorf, the 7th January, 1760.

to an ode to Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick, which he had written at Grüssau on the 6th April, 1758.

“I wanted,” he said to me, when he had revised it thoroughly, “to make it stronger by compressing it more. Don’t you think that it will make a sensation just as it is at present. The patriarch only had the first sketch; if he sees this, ‘Poof,’ he will say, ‘amidst all his occupations and worries, the rogue still writes rather good verses,’—provided that my scoundrel does not make bad use of the other pieces I sent to him.”

Although the King had had some vexation over this sketch, as he called it, which he had sent to Voltaire, he delighted to read and re-read to me this strophe :

Quoi ! votre faible monarque,  
 Jouet de la Pompadour,<sup>1</sup>  
 Flétri de plus d’une marque  
 Des chaînes d’un vil amour,<sup>2</sup>  
 Lui qui, détestant les peines,  
 Au hasard remet les rênes  
 De son royaume aux abois,  
 Cet esclave parle en maître,  
 Ce Céladon sous un hêtre  
 Croit dieter le sort des rois.’<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This ran at first :

Quoi ! votre faible monarque,  
 Jouet d’un indigne amour,  
 Flétri de plus d’une marque  
 Des fers de la Pompadour.

[‘What ! your feeble monarch, the plaything of a shameful love, branded with more than one mark of the fetters of La Pompadour.’]

<sup>2</sup> Des opprobres de l’amour (p. 20, *supra*).

<sup>3</sup> [‘What ! your feeble monarch, the plaything of La Pompadour, branded with more than one mark of the chains of a vile love, he who,’ etc., *vide* p. 20, *supra*.]

The King, having finished the correction of the ode to Duke Ferdinand, corrected his favourite epistle to his sister of Baireuth. He had begun this epistle, as I think I have said, a few days after the battle of Kolin; he had finished it on the day before the battle of Hochkirchen, touched it up at different times at Breslau during the winter quarters of '58, taken it up again at still other times, and, finally, he put the last touches to it during this stay at Freiberg. This is the beginning :

O doux et cher espoir du reste de mes jours,  
 O sœur, dont l'amitié, si fertile <sup>1</sup> en secours,  
 Partage mes chagrins, de mes douleurs s'attriste  
 Et d'un bras secourable au sein des maux m'assiste.<sup>2</sup>

While reading these four lines to me, he shed tears, which continued to flow all the time he was reading the epistle. He told me again, after he had finished, all that he had told me so many times about this dear sister so tenderly loved.—The King next corrected the epistle to my Lord Marischal, which he had written at Breslau on the 16th February, 1759.

He spent several days on the correction of this piece, of which he always gave me the rough drafts; <sup>3</sup> sometimes, on my asking him, he

<sup>1</sup> The King had written *fertil*; I said that this would not do, that it should be *fertile*; it was like *crép* instead of *crépe*; covering with a *crép* (crape) [*vide p. 158, vol. i.*].

<sup>2</sup> ['O dear and gentle hope of the remainder of my days, O sister, whose friendship, so rich in help, shares my griefs, is saddened by my sorrows, and with a helping arm assists me amid my misfortunes.']

<sup>3</sup> In the fire at Burkersdorf, in 1778, I lost the greater part of these rough drafts and of these copied and recorrected pieces. I used to

permitted me even to make for myself a copy of these corrected pieces, being doubtless quite certain that I should not abuse the confidence he showed in me. He used to say to me rather frequently :

“ If, while reading over my nonsense in your rooms, you find that I have overlooked any mistakes, have the kindness to point them out to me, and you will oblige me exceedingly. An author is usually prejudiced in favour of his work, and, with this affectionate prejudice, he does not perceive its weaknesses ; he has no idea of them even. And now, enough, my friend ; my corrections being finished, I am going to start on an ode which I shall address to my dear nephew, the Crown Prince.” The King’s *enough* was premature ; he was this time forced to correct again what he imagined he had finished with.

Towards the end of January, I received this anonymous letter :

‘ There has just been published a clandestine edition of the poems of the philosopher of Sans-Souci. The blackest malice is no doubt very largely behind this publication. As this affects the King, his peace of mind and his good name, and as you have an affection for this great monarch, inform him without delay

compare them, and I had found that the first drafts or the sketches were usually better than these same pieces revised and corrected. I also lost, unfortunately, in this fire some interesting documents concerning the King, on which I had proposed to work during the campaign.

of what I have the honour of telling you. You can be sure of the news I am sending you ; in four days, you will have the book itself.'

As I was assured that in four days I should have the book, I waited until this day to communicate to the King the information I had received, and to hand him the book itself. I thought that in this way I should spare this Prince a few disagreeable moments, being persuaded that he would have but too many of them, when he saw himself what had happened. At the end of four days, indeed, I did receive the book. I did not think of looking through it. In the evening, I went to the King as usual ; I found him in a very good humour ; he came up to me with an open, laughing look :

“ My friend, I have read a great deal to-day, and I am as pleased as a king. What have you done to-day, what news is there ? ”

I grieved exceedingly at being forced to disturb this pleasure of which he spoke to me :

‘ Sire, I have no good news to announce to-day to Your Majesty, and this distresses me. You will see from this book which has just been published what is the matter.’

At the sight of it, he cried out :

“ My poems, my poems, and who is the incarnate devil who has published them, and played me this infamous trick ! ” And a few moments later : “ My friend, this is dreadful ! My poems, where did the b—— get them ? Who is the infernal scoundrel ? ”

This was his beginning ; his indignation and his grief seemed to me extreme. "The scoundrel!" he repeated continually. In the first moment of anger, he said to me :

"The Duke de Nivernois has played me this trick ; this is all the more odious and infamous because the Duke knows very well that I have always liked, esteemed and distinguished him among all those who are in France. But no, my dear sir, it is not he ; he is too honest, too right-minded ; I make amends to him for the suspicion which arose in my mind. You will see, it is Voltaire ; he is the only scoundrel who is capable of playing me such a trick. I know my rogue thoroughly."

"No," he said to me, after a few moments of reflection, "no, he is not the author of this infamy. However wicked he may be, he is incapable of playing so treacherous a trick."

His suspicions next fell on Darget, on one of his aides-de-camp to whom he had given his poems, and finally they fell on Captain de Bonneville.

"Yes, yes, it is he, he himself ; I cannot doubt it ; the scoundrel shall pay for it."

Never had I seen so much concern.

"I only composed my poems as a recreation and in order to cheer myself at the expense of those who were doing me an injury, and they must needs become public in the most critical moment of my existence ! If I could have suspected this publicity, I should have burned my book and all

my notebooks. What a king says, good or evil, is never effaced."

As I had not yet read this book, and I had no idea of what was in it, I said to the King :

'But, Sire, what harm can the publication of this work do to you?'

"What harm? And did you not read, my dear sir, my tirades against England, Russia, and others? That is what is diabolical at the present moment, and what must be changed as quickly as possible."

'No, Sire, I read none of these tirades of which you do me the honour to speak to me, for I have no knowledge of your work.'

"But you brought it to me!"

'That is true, Sire, but it is also true that I have not even opened the book.'

"You show proof indeed of a great discretion. Well, I will read to you these unfortunate verses which are the cause of my anxiety."

He read them to me.

"You see exactly now that, for very strong political reasons, I have cause to be uneasy, and to hasten to publish another edition, in which I shall make the necessary corrections. If I make haste, I shall stop this edition, which I shall call very imperfect, and I shall prevent certain people from crying out. These corrections are only necessary for the politicians. If it were not for these animals, devil take me if I would touch up my work."

The King passed a very uneasy and very agitated



night. On rising, he saw that his head and face were very swollen. He had complained on going to bed of a violent pain which a decayed tooth was causing him. When I went to him on the following day at the appointed hour, I found His Majesty with his head wrapped up in such a way that you could only see the tip of his nose and his eyes, which were almost closed. In this state, which distressed me exceedingly, he was working at the corrections of which he had spoken to me the day before.

“ Ah, there you are, my dear sir. You see what a state you find me in! I passed a cruel night. My poor head is stuffed with business and embarrassments, and I must give my time to these accursed verses which I must change. You see how many I have done already, my friend.”

He had rewritten more than a hundred and fifty lines; I say this number, because he had noted it down in the margin. This painful and disagreeable correction occupied the King until the 19th of February. He had written, moreover, very hastily, a short preface in which he complained of the imperfect edition published by malice.

“ If they act thus,” he said, “ with the green wood, what will they not do to the dry ! ”

He placed at the head of his corrected work, an ode against calumny, and several stanzas paraphrased from Ecclesiastes.

“ An affectation of piety,” he said, “ which I have written solely to calm the furious cries of

those insane zealots who stir up the world, and also stir it up against me.”

The King ordered me to send the lot to the Marquis d'Argens, beseeching him to find a printer, and recommending him to make all possible speed ; the whole bundle went off on the 19th.

The good Marquis applied to Néaulme, a printer and bookseller of Holland, who was then in Berlin. He first of all accepted the Marquis's proposal ; then, urged on by his wife, who foolishly saw all sorts of embarrassments and unpleasantnesses for her husband in the publication of this work, he wrote to the Marquis that he could not undertake it. The Marquis wrote to me that Néaulme would not have anything to do with this book of poems, and that he had thought of Voss, a bookseller in Berlin, who would be very pleased to look after the printing, and that I was to ask His Majesty's approval. I reported what had been written to me ; the King was annoyed and in a very bad humour.

“ What silly difficulties are they raising, and what a time they are losing to find out whether this man or that shall print my work ! And what the devil do I care whether it is Néaulme or Voss who prints it, provided they make haste ! The Marquis should have understood that he must gain time, and not lose it in useless discussions with that w——. Write again this evening then, I beg you, to the Marquis, and tell him to print for the love of heaven, and hurry. I will also write a word to him which you can slip into your letter. Good

evening, my friend. Write quickly; these confounded people annoy me. Tell the Marquis also to send me my Charles XII.; it should have been printed a long while ago. How slow these Berliners are, my dear sir. Adieu."

The King, while correcting these pieces of which I have just spoken, put down on a slip of paper, at meal-times, any ideas that came to him for new subjects, on which he proposed to work.

He began his compositions by an ode to the Crown Prince of Brunswick. This piece was finished at the end of January.

"That, my friend, will be my favourite piece, since my dear nephew is its subject. I will let it rest for some time on my table, and will take it up again and correct it. Then I shall read my piece, and I shall perceive the slightest fault. That is the best way. If you revise a piece on any subject while your head is still full of it, you never notice the faults."

Although he felt that this was the best way, to leave a work in order to revise it with a cool head, he took up his ode again on the following day, corrected it and told me to send it to the Marquis; which I did on the same day, begging him that, when he replied to His Majesty, he should point out a few negligences, two or three ambiguous lines, a line put in merely for the rhyme, and, of several harsh lines, this which was the harshest of all:

Je puis au moins prévoir par mes heureux présages.

After this ode, the King composed the *Account of Phihihu, emissary of the Emperor of China to Europe, translated from the Chinese. At Cologne, Pierre Marteau, 1760, small duodecimo.*<sup>1</sup>

He sent this short piece to the Marquis, with this title, to be printed, requesting him to print six copies only; he sent with it an epistle which began thus :

Marquis, je vais  
Sur vos brisées,  
Tantôt Suisse,  
Tantôt Chinois.<sup>2</sup>

“Do you think, my dear sir, that I shall be recognised in this work ?”

‘I do not doubt it, Sire, *ex ungue leonem.*’

“The godly will make a devilish row about it, I am certain. It takes less than that to make them bawl; but I don’t care a hang. The holy father, you will see, will give me absolution, in spite of the slight taps I give him, if I manage to thrash his dear friends.”

To a letter which the Marquis d’Argens wrote to the King, His Majesty replied by an epistle in verse which began thus :

Non, jamais courtisan, au langage flatteur,  
N’a d’un encens plus fin su nourrir son idole.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Austrians published in several gazettes extracts from this account, and made it out to be much more dangerous than Spinoza. The King told me this and that in these extracts he had been pretty well indicated, as you might, he said, hit the nail on the head.

<sup>2</sup> [‘Marquis, I am at your heels, now a Swiss, now a Chinaman.’]

<sup>3</sup> [‘No, never has a courtier, with flattering tongue, fed his idol with more subtle incense.’]

He read it twice to me.

“ You see, my dear sir, I am not a laggard with my friends and my enemies. Like a good Christian, I should hold out the left cheek to the latter when they strike me on the right ; but, while admiring the forgiveness of injuries received, I do not feel that I have strength of will enough to tolerate the harm that is done me, and even that which I suspect any one of wishing to do me.”

The King next composed the following epistle, writing to Voltaire, who had said horrid things to him about Maupertuis :

Laissez en paix la froide cendre  
Et les mânes de Maupertuis.<sup>1</sup>

“ This man,” he said, “ is a hundred times wickeder than the dogs who fight for bones in the street. They forget their hatred, when they have avenged themselves ; but Voltaire never forgets, never forgives. He is a strange, treacherous creature ; it is dangerous to irritate him ; he bites even without being irritated.”

A Swiss officer, named M. de Holland, had left the Dutch service, on the pressing solicitations made to him by M. de Hellen,<sup>2</sup> in order to enter the King’s as an artillery officer. Being clever at his profession and a good mathematician, he had pleased the King, who promised to make a career for him which would leave him with no regret. In spite of these fine promises, which were not

<sup>1</sup> [ ‘ Leave in peace the cold ashes and the shade of Maupertuis. ’ ]

<sup>2</sup> This M. de Hellen was our envoy at the Hague.

fulfilled soon enough to please him, and counting more on his betrothed, whom he had left in Holland, he begged me to ask His Majesty for permission to go and marry the lady. Although the moment was not a favourable one, I spoke to the King, who refused. I took advantage of a moment of gaiety in which I found the King to return to the charge. He granted the major's request, but on the condition that this marriage should not take place until the end of the war. I reported this consent and the condition to the major, who thought the latter was very reasonable ; but the lady, a rich heiress, thinking that peace might still be a very long way off, too long perhaps for her desires, and being courted by another worshipper who was at hand and immediately ready, gave herself to him, and dismissed the poor major, who had to bear with the thing in patience. I told the King of this misadventure.

“ How did he take it ? ”

‘ Very well, Sire, and with all the more resignation in that he builds all his hopes on Your Majesty.’

“ I will recompense him for his loss.”

I gave this good news to the major.

The King drew up on this subject a rough sketch, of which he showed me the beginning, which ran thus :

Dans ces beaux jours où renaît la nature,  
Où l'air pesant de ses frimas s'épure.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [‘ In these fine days when nature is reborn, when the heavy air is purified of its frosts.’]

“ There is a piece for your major ; I will finish it in our country billets.<sup>1</sup> I will then correct it and correct it again, so that it may be worthy of him. At the moment, I have two or three *moorsels* which I want to finish before leaving this place.”

After having made a little fun at the expense of the major, the King composed an ode to the Germans :

O malheureux Germains ! vos guerres intestines,  
 Vos troubles, vos fureurs, annoncent vos ruines.<sup>2</sup>

This was the piece in which the King made the least erasures and corrections.

“ I wrote it almost in one *bleeding*,” he said. “ I was quite full of my subject. I think it is pretty good, rather Racinian, and full of new ideas.”

M. d’Alembert wrote to the King that the *Encyclopédie* had been forbidden in France, and that they wanted to burn his works. The Marquis d’Argens, who transmitted this letter to the King, confirmed the first point, and, instead of wanting to burn the works of the philosopher, he wrote that they had been burned. To console M. d’Alembert for this incendiary operation, the King composed an epistle for him, telling him in a note written with his own hand that the fire, far from having done any harm to his works, would make them and him still more famous, although they could have dis-

<sup>1</sup> He finished it, in fact, in May at Schlettau, and gave it to me to hand to the major.

<sup>2</sup> [‘ O unfortunate Germans ! Your intestinal wars, your broils, your frenzies portend your ruin.’]

pensed with that operation to reach the greatest celebrity. This is the beginning of this epistle :

Un sénat de Midas, en étole, en soutane,  
A proscrit, nous dit-on, vos immortels écrits.<sup>1</sup>

After the return of the King to Elsterwerda and before the Maxen affair, Voltaire had often written to the King, to advise him to make peace. The King replied that he asked nothing better ; the patriarch answered that the thing was feasible, that he saw a way, and that he would devote himself to it through a certain channel of which he would tell him one day. The King conceived some hope on these letters, although he held up to ridicule the patriarch and his letters.

“ He has a mania for negotiations, as he has also to be rich. He wants to play the part of Prior, the envoy of London to France. He struts about and thinks himself a born ambassador. The old madman does not know and does not perceive that there never was a man less fitted than he to negotiate.”

However, the King replied in verse to Voltaire ; he addressed this political epistle to him :

C'est donc vous qui croyez m'exhorter à la paix :  
Elle a fait de tout temps le but de mes souhaits.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [‘ A senate of Midas, in stole and cassock, has condemned, they tell us, your immortal writings.’]

<sup>2</sup> [‘ It is you then who think you are exhorting me to peace ; it has been all the while the object of my wishes.’] Variant :

Vous voulez aujourd’hui m’exhorter à la paix :  
Elle est depuis longtemps l’objet de mes souhaits.

[‘ You are trying now to exhort me to peace : it has long been the object of my wishes.’]



He composed another for him, which, after having said that he had covered himself with laurels in the career of letters, he finished with these lines :

Malgré tant d'ouvrages bien faits,  
Avec l'Europe je croirais,  
Si par une habile manœuvre  
Vos soins nous ramenaient la paix,  
Que ce serait votre chef-d'œuvre.<sup>1</sup>

The patriarch was not behindhand with the King ; he replied immediately, giving a good deal of praise for the verses he had received, and the King, agreeably flattered, lost no time in composing another epistle to the poet-negotiator :

De l'art de César et du vôtre  
J'étais trop amoureux dans ma jeune saison—

and he ended :

De borner mes faibles mérites  
Aux soins de secourir la veuve et l'orphelin.<sup>2</sup>

The letters followed one another rather quickly on these fine negotiations. Voltaire wrote again that on the instance of a beautiful, though affected,<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [‘In spite of so many well-written works, with Europe I should think that, if by a clever manœuvre your endeavours restored peace to us, this would be your masterpiece.’]

<sup>2</sup> [‘Of Cæsar’s art and yours I was too fond in my youthful season—To confine my feeble abilities to the care of succouring the widow and the orphan.’] Voltaire used to read to everybody who came to see him everything he received from the King, and, while reading, he often changed many things, or said them otherwise than as they had been written. When he read this piece, he said when he came to *the widow and the orphan* : ‘Poof, poof, he makes as many as he can of both, a fine way of succouring them.’

<sup>3</sup> [*Minaudière* ; Carlyle translates this word as ‘gillfirt,’ which is hardly the sense of the word, though one of the attributes of the lady, no doubt.]

lady, the mistress of a certain duke, a certain minister, he had decided to send to the latter what the King had just written, and that he could not refrain from attaching to his letter the reply the Duke had made to him. The King did not favour either the letter of the poet or the reply of a certain minister; he poked fun at both, and this persiflage was a little more than tartish.

“ People are mad,” he said. “ They will remain so until the end of the ages. I have never given the slightest credence to the prattlings of poet Prior-Voltaire, and I have never hoped for anything good from this Lorrainer, Choiseul. There are two cabals at Versailles, one wants peace, but the certain minister, lover of the affected lady, wants war, and so much so that he has found the means to get the better of the others, and you will see—remember what I am telling you—that the likelihood of peace is farther off than ever.”

Yet the King had said only a few days before :

“ You will see that the French will be obliged to make peace. Their finances are exhausted, their commerce ruined, and peace will be made. I am expecting it, and this will be a great deal gained.”

This letter of Voltaire’s to the King and the reply of the Duke to the poet gave birth to the idea of this epistle to the patriarch :

Peuples charmans, aimables fous,  
Qui parlez de la paix, sans songer à la foudre.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [‘ Delightful people, amiable madmen, who talk of peace without thinking of the lightning.’]

The King brought his compositions in prose and verse to an end with this epistle :

Enfin le triste hiver précipite ses pas,  
Il fuit, enveloppé de ses sombres frimas.<sup>1</sup>

“ Thus, my dear sir, do I take leave of this harsh winter which we have undergone here, and of this stay here, where, God knows, I have suffered agonies of mind.”

It would seem from the details which I have just given of the corrections and compositions of the King in these winter quarters that not a moment was left to him in which to read. Yet he did find time and took advantage of it, fixing for himself, as I said at the beginning of the description of our stay at Freiberg, certain hours for reading, which he did alone.

Here is the record. He began by reading *Pierre de Provence* and *Barbe-bleue*.

“ You would never guess what I have read,” he said on the evening that he read these stories.

‘ No, Sire.’

“ *Pierre de Provence, Barbe-bleue!* Am I not an old madman to amuse myself with such nonsense. I am like Malebranche, who wished he could amuse himself with a rattle, and I say with La Fontaine :

Si Peau d’âne m’était conté,  
J’y prendrais un plaisir extrême.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [‘ At last the cheerless winter is hastening his steps: he flies, wrapped up in his gloomy frosts.’]

<sup>2</sup> [‘ If I were told a fairy tale, I should take an extreme pleasure in it.’]

“Alas, my friend, I have need of everything that will help me to support my present misfortune, and to drive away the dreams of a future which will perhaps be fatal to me. While reading my *Barbe-bleue*, moreover, sir, I made some very serious reflections of which I have kept a note. If I attain that peace I so much desire, I will expand these reflections, and will make of them the most singular, the most astonishing, the most orthodox, the most edifying, and, sir, the most ridiculous of all the works of the eighteenth century.”<sup>1</sup>

This fine reading done, the King read the following books, in the order indicated: the *Spectateur*, the *Mentor moderne*, the *Misanthrope*.

“I had looked forward with pleasure to re-reading these books. They had pleased me extremely at my Rheinsberg, and they now displease me, so much does age, or perhaps a man’s situation, change his manner of seeing things and of appreciating them.”<sup>2</sup>

He made me a present of these three works.

*Virgile*, by the Abbé des Fontaines; *Horace*, by Sanadon, in the edition in one volume which he had had made in the royal printing press, and *l’Homme* by Pellegrin; the works of Ovid in two volumes, also from his printing press; Racine, his

<sup>1</sup> The King, in fact, kept his word; he began, corrected, left, and took up again at different times this work which, to speak truly, does him no honour; he finished it finally, and had it printed after the war of 1778, to the great regret of all upright people attached to the King.

<sup>2</sup> He re-read the *Spectateur* at Breslau in 1762, and it pleased him.

tragedies; Voltaire, his tragedies and four volumes of his miscellaneous works; Gresset's *Vert-vert*, the *Chartreuse*, the *Épître au Père Bougeant*, and his epistle to his sister on his convalescence; *Les Annales de l'Empire*, the memoirs of Feuquières, the last two campaigns of Turenne, which he esteemed exceedingly, and what he had at hand concerning Prince Eugene, a work, he said, which could have been much better written. He finished his readings as he had begun them by some light reading, he said, Hamilton's stories, and the memoirs of the Comte de Grammont, which follow these pretty tales.

Such were the corrections, the compositions and the readings of the King during his stay at Freiberg. These literary occupations never made him lose sight for a moment of the essential point with his army, that of repairing the losses which it had suffered, and all the preparations for a new campaign, and the means of bringing to an end by negotiation so disastrous a war. What a number of letters were written during these winter quarters to Prince Ferdinand, to his ministers in foreign courts, to the generals who commanded corps, to the ministers of provinces, to the governors, to the commandants of fortresses, to the leaders of regiments, to all those in charge of the supplies and the equipment necessary for a campaign. This correspondence was immense. It alone would have filled up the whole time of a man who was occupied only with such things.

The King, during the whole time almost of his stay at Freiberg, was gloomy, exceedingly melancholy and in a very bad humour. Sometimes, when he caught a glimpse of hope, he gave way to his natural gaiety ; composing playful pieces, telling stories, and he said :

“ These, my friend, are the songs with which I lull my poor little child to prevent him from crying, to soothe the pains he feels, and to send him to sleep, if it is possible.”

But these moments of happiness for him, which delighted me, were of very short duration.

“ I am like the swan whose voice is never more melodious than when he is drawing towards his end. I feel, my dear sir, and I see the approach of my downfall. Be assured that I shall oppose the most stoical courage to the reverses which I see suspended over my head. What horror, if I were to survive my nation and myself ! ”

The King, his father, the Queen, his mother, the Prince of Prussia, the Margravine of Baireuth presented themselves in turn to his mind to increase the melancholy he felt. He repeated to me with emotion what he had told me so often concerning them, and every time he spoke to me about them, he always said :

“ My poor friend, I shall make you as melancholy and as hypochondriacal as myself.”

One day when the Marquis d'Argens announced to him the death of one of his cooks who had been cut off short :

“Read,” he said to me, “what the Marquis writes to me, and what I have just replied to him. Don’t you think that I am very mad to think of replacing this cook, who was a very bad fellow, at so critical a moment when I do not know quite whether I shall see the end of this unfortunate war, and whether I shall have enough money left to pay those whom I engage ?”

Such was the tone of nearly all his conversations, but he was much more gloomy still during the last two days that we remained in this town.

In the morning the King had his books and papers packed, and this made everybody believe that he would start off on that very day ; but he did nothing of the kind. I had orders to go to him at one o’clock, immediately after his dinner, which only lasted a few minutes.

23rd April,  
1760, at  
Freiberg.

“I am not well,” he said, “not at all well. I do not know what is the matter with me. Being unable to read and write, I have had all my nonsense packed up. How can I be well with the fatal idea that I shall succumb sooner or later ? You have seen, my dear sir, that I have lived here to the letter the life of a Benedictine, that I buried myself with my books and my writings, and that more often than not I had my melancholy meals with them. I have experienced in these moments of reading and composition all the power of their assistance ; but . . . but it is all of no more avail. The campaign is about to begin ; great blows will be given ; and, after all the reverses I have suffered,

have I not reason to fear that I shall experience more terrible reverses still? All that I can do is to set everything going to prevent them, if it is possible, and to steel myself to bear them if they happen. I shall certainly not spare myself, and, to save my country, I will willingly sacrifice my life, which is very harsh, painful and cruel. What a poor sacrifice, after all, it would be, my dear sir!"

Against these very gloomy speeches I urged the beauty of his genius, which would enable him to find means enough to meet all his enemies, his steadfastness of soul; I even urged the fear which he had of succumbing sooner or later: "I hope, Sire, that the catastrophe which you fear will not happen, because you fear it, and because things will go better than you imagine, or less badly than you think."

"Ah, that is an amusing idea, and how do you make that out? Tell me, I beg you."

"I think, Sire, that I have had the honour of putting before Your Majesty this observation which I had made that everything usually went well when you feared the contrary, and that you very rarely met with the success you had looked for, or had hoped for."

I did not wish to say, "that you were too confident of," for his confidence often led him to think too lightly of his adversaries.

"But you must quote the facts."

I quoted Olmütz to him. "Your Majesty said to me one evening at Schmirnitz: I am now going



to undertake the siege ; make your bed, sleep in peace ; you will see that I shall take the town without striking a blow.’

“ *Vero.* Next.”

‘ On the eve of the battle of Zorndorf, when you were lodged at Dammühle : To-morrow, you said, I attack the Ursomans ; I shall thrash them thoroughly and without great losses.’

“ Let that pass too. Have you any others ? ”

‘ At Hochkirchen, you thought that the Austrians would proceed of their own accord into Bohemia, and that you would force them to return there if they persisted in remaining in Lusatia.’

“ You recall there, my dear sir, a sad memory, but you say nothing to me on the subject of my fears.”

‘ You feared exceedingly, after this affair, for Neisse and for Saxony, and Saxony and Neisse remained in your hands. You feared that the whole bark would founder after Kunersdorf, and the bark is still sailing and will sail for a long while yet.’

The King smiled at my idea, and himself presented to me all the cases in this campaign which might justify my observation. He even spoke to me, to my great surprise, of the Maxen affair, and he drew this conclusion :

“ Therefore, in order to have a little good fortune, we must doubt, fear and mistrust events ; if this is a necessary preliminary to success, ah, my friend, what successes I ought to look for now ! ”

This conversation finished at four o'clock.

“ I have a few orders still to give for the march we have to make. If the conversation of an unfortunate is not too great a burden to you, do me the pleasure of returning at six o'clock.”

I returned; the King no longer had that uneasiness of which he complained; but his conversation was none the less serious and sad.

After having talked to me for a while of the Crown Prince, of the pleasure it had been to him to see him again, of the sorrow his departure had caused him,<sup>1</sup> of all the sad ideas which on this occasion had again presented themselves to his mind, of the abilities and goodness of heart of this Prince, he ended by saying to me, his eyes wet with tears :

“ Who knows if we shall ever see each other again ! ”

This exclamation touched me, as it was the expression of a soul afflicted with sadness. I tried, by speaking of the Crown Prince himself, to divert him from the gloominess I observed in him; I spoke of the ode he had addressed to the Prince, of the care with which he had worked at it, of the approbation it would have when it was known.

“ It is not bad,” he said, “ in view of my unprecedented position; but in what way does this help me? Circumstances are none the less stormy and terrible for me; I rage none the less at my mis-

<sup>1</sup> He left Freiberg in March.

fortune and my much too unhappy life. It is enough for me to desire a thing for it to escape me ; you have in the Tantalus of the fable the image of the torments I am suffering from. I have sincerely desired peace ; I have done what is humanly possible to obtain it ; I have knocked and others have knocked for me at all the doors, and all the doors remained shut. Sometimes I really thought that peace was going to smile on me, and at the moment when I thought I held her, when I said to myself, here she is, at last here she is,—the traitress escaped me. With this picture which I have drawn for you, ask yourself, my dear sir, whether there exists a more unfortunate being than I. I hoped that the death of one of my illustrious brother-kings would bring about some changes which would be favourable to me, and to my great astonishment, and to the astonishment even of all Europe, nothing is changed, and my hopes came to nothing. I sent Cocceji, a clever, skilful man, to Turin, to try whether the King of Sardinia could not be induced to make a diversion in Lombardy, a diversion which would have kept busy either the King of France or the Queen-Empress, and my endeavours were in vain. That, my dear sir, is a succession of misfortunes reserved for me alone ; that is the fatal lot which I have drawn in the great lottery of this best of worlds, a lot all the more fatal because I must keep it and be satisfied with it. However, my friend, if all this ends in a catastrophe, I shall not, believe me,

be the dupe of the cruel fate that pursues me ; I shall end the play as it should end.”

At these words, he again declaimed these lines which I had often heard :

Quand on a tout perdu, quand on n'a plus d'espoir,  
La vie est un opprobre, et la mort un devoir.

“ I will do my duty, certainly, in all possible respects.”

Placing his hand then on my shoulder : “ I abuse your kindness, my friend,” he said ; “ I feel it. You had hoped for pleasant times with me, and, because of the interest which you take in my position, I have caused you to pass but very sad ones.”

The reply which I made to him, a reply that came from a heart that was devoted to him, brought me an embrace.

“ Be always the same, and whatever may be my situation, you will not have reason to regret the moments you have given to me. Let us be prepared for any event, and let us give ourselves up to the torrent of vicissitudes which whirls us away in its course. Good evening and good night. Until to-morrow for the last time in this room where I have spent some very cruel moments. I think it is late ? ”

‘ Ten o'clock, Sire.’

“ What a lot of chatter I have made you listen to ! Adieu.”

I was called at four o'clock ; I found the King busy writing.

“ You see me boiling down the lines which I sent last month to the good Marquis ; they convey pretty well my ideas on the manner of ending a tragedy.

“ You know, my dear sir, that since the moment when I showed you at Doberschütz my little box of consolation, I have not changed my mind. It is fixed ; it will remain fixed. Would I survive my total destruction ? The idea fills me with horror ! No, no, my friend, this will not happen ! My honest Marquis has no conception of all this ; he thinks, because I compose verses, that my mind is at ease ; but I compose them to take my mind off the sorrow that overwhelms me, to give myself a few moments of quiet. It is less for myself, my dear sir, you may be sure, that I suffer and that I consider my position a cruel one ; it is for the misfortunes which I see ready to fall on my country ; I confess to you, this dismal idea, which is continually present to my mind, completely shakes my resolution.

“ D’Argens hopes, like you, that I shall come out well of all this ; but he does not compare, as you are able to do, my forces and resources with those of all the enemies who will beset me, and whom I must fight. Believe me, Catt, the prospect is a cruel one. I see it in its full extent, and, after having been for so long the plaything of fortune, how is it possible for me not to fear the blows she still has in store for me ? But enough of these Jeremiads ; they lead to nothing. We must act, fortify ourselves against the blows of fate, and as

far as possible stand firm. I have restored, as far as I have been able, the regiments lost at Maxen and in Diericke's affair, but what regiments, my dear sir! They are merely there for show; I had to take both Saxon peasants and deserters, and what I could find in the way of officers to lead this collection of men. In spite of these drawbacks, I shall act vigorously, but with that circumspection demanded by the present state of my troops and the number of my enemies, which is greater still for this campaign than for those which preceded it. I am using two regiments of dragoons, which I have recalled from Prince Ferdinand's army, to reinforce my cavalry. To-morrow afternoon, we shall set sail, and then, come what may! I have still several arrangements to make, so I will not keep you longer. Perhaps I shall send for you for a moment to-morrow during the morning. If I do not, I wish you good evening and a happy arrival at Schlettau, where I shall set up my quarters. Do not forget me in your prayers, which will be earnest, I think. Adieu."

25th April,  
1760, before  
noon at  
Freiberg,  
after noon  
at Schlettau  
head-  
quarters.

I was called at nine o'clock in the morning; the King had unpacked his books.

"I have attended to all my business," said the King, "and, wishing to take advantage of a few moments, I unpacked my books. You see me busy going over a few passages of my illegitimate work."<sup>1</sup>

' Illegitimate, Sire ? '

<sup>1</sup> His *Poésies diverses*.

“ Yes, or bastard, if you like.”

He read me the passages of his *Poésies diverses* which he had altered, asking me in respect of each alteration whether it seemed a natural one, and whether the public would believe that the edition which he was having published was in fact the legitimate edition.

‘ I think so, Sire.’

“ Is it not in a way making a great flirt of a very modest woman ? ”

‘ Yes ; Your Majesty is very skilful in making such metamorphoses.’

“ But this metamorphosis cost me a great deal of trouble, and the reason which forced me to make it caused me and still causes me anxiety, for here I am, against my will, a poet unmasked in the eyes of all the scientific tribe ; and it really makes me angry to be so. What will they not say about me, and what accursed, wretched pieces will they not pass as being mine ? The rogues who published my poems played me in all possible respects the most infernal trick ; but this is not what should be worrying me now ; I must get out of my present fix. If at the end of this campaign, which will be a very difficult one, my dear sir, I am still alive, I hope then that I shall save my bark, and that at last I shall be able to breathe a little more freely. What do you think of all this ? Do you still hope ? ”

‘ Yes, Sire, I hope.’

“ You are, indeed, an altogether singular person. How can you hope ? Are you relying, like our good

Marquis, on those prophecies which are being bandied about, and which are all favourable to us, he writes me ? ”

‘ No, Sire ; I have no belief at all in modern prophecies ; I am certain that the Marquis believes in them no more than I.’

“ Oh, the deuce, he does believe in them. . . . Well, then, sir, what is it that makes you so confident ? ”

‘ What you did me the honour often to tell me in these quarters here, that you would act with extreme caution with the enemy, that you would endeavour more than ever to give them no opportunities, that you would take advantage of all the mistakes they might make, and would regard them as people who were not to be taken lightly ; these, Sire, were your words, and they reassured me. The great point is that Your Majesty should take care of your health, and should not brood so much, as you have done hitherto, on sorrowful ideas.’

“ Indeed, I think you are preaching me there a little sermon, and how can I be without sorrowful ideas in my present position ? Tell me how, if you know ; my sorrowful idea is the state of my country ; I will sacrifice everything to save it. The uncertainty whether I shall save it or not is what torments me, and what maddens me sometimes. And what a number of times in the day, my dear sir, I have consigned my existence to the devil.”



## PART FOUR

### 1760—COUNTRY BILLETS AND CAMPAIGN

I WAS called at eight o'clock. I found the King busy arranging his papers and his books.

This 25th April, 1760, departure from Freiberg, arrival at Schlettau at five o'clock in the evening.

“ You see me here with my consolations ; as I expect to make a rather long stay here, this is the work I have cut out for myself. I shall go through these books thoroughly, and I shall scrawl over the paper which you see there.”

‘ And there is not a little of it either, Sire. A Benedictine would not use more in the course of a year.’

“ That might well be so.”

He had arranged in this order the books which he proposed to read : the first volume of *Lucretius*, the second volume of *La Manière d'étudier les belles-lettres*, the *Rhetoric* and the *Poetic* of Aristotle, Fléchier's *Oraisons funèbres*, Massillon's *Petit Carême*, Racine's *Zaïre*, Voltaire's *Alzire*, *Oreste*, *Mérope* and *Brutus*, Tacitus, Bayle's *Contrains-les d'entrer*, and the last two campaigns of Turenne. Such was to be his reading during these country billets.

“ I shall feed my mind well here, for I foresee that in this campaign I shall have no time to give

to letters and to philosophy. This campaign will be a lively one, my dear sir; it will be terrible. What will be the result? *Ignoramus*; is that good Latin?"

'Very good, Sire.'

"I think that a little rest will be very good both for you and me; so be well. To-morrow at five o'clock."

This 26th  
April, 1760,  
at Schlettau.

The King seemed to me rather pleased and tranquil in mind during the first moments I was with him.

"I gadded about a great deal in the morning. I have placed all my troops as they should be; the greater part are in billets; that will cheer them up a bit. What have they not suffered during the whole of the preceding campaign and especially from last November up to this moment! I have been keenly touched by their misfortunes, and if these brave people suffer so much for me, do I not owe them the sacrifice of my repose and my comfort?"

"While on my round this morning, I met a tiny little officer. 'You are very young,' I said to him, 'are your ears dry?' My bit of a man, without losing countenance, looked at me steadily and replied: 'Sire, I am young, it is true, but my courage is old.' This reply pleased me; I think he will become a good subject."

While speaking thus, he saw others quite as young who were playing at horses beneath his windows, as little boys do.

“Come here quickly, my dear sir. Look at those little rogues, what childishness !”

Then he declaimed these lines :

Voilà donc quels vengeurs s'arment pour ta querelle,  
*Un vieillard*, des enfans, ô sagesse éternelle !  
 Mais, si tu les soutiens, qui peut les ébranler ? <sup>1</sup>

The sight of these young officers amusing themselves thus pained him exceedingly ; his gloomy ideas reappeared.

“It is not fatigues or peril that I fear, my friend, but the inexperience of so many officers whom I have been compelled to take just as they are, and the difficulty of driving well home into the heads of those whom I must use all my arrangements and all my plans. The slightest mistake made in this campaign ruins me infallibly. Look at what I shall have against me : Soltykow and Loudon, at the head of their large armies, are aiming at Silesia ; Daun, the Prince of Würtemberg, the Prince of Zweibrücken, at Saxony and my poor country ; if to the number of these enemies, the half of which would suffice to annihilate me, you add the Swedes and the Tottlebens and the fleets, ask yourself whether there can be a more cruel position than mine, whether my agonies of mind are not natural, and whether I have not every possible reason to cry out : *O God, grant that this cup pass far from me.*”

<sup>1</sup> *Athalie*, act iii. scene 7. [‘See what avengers are arming for your quarrel, an old man, children, O eternal wisdom ! But, if you stand by them, who can shatter them ?’]

This tone continued until the moment when I retired.

“ Good evening ; it is seven o’clock. I am going to see whether my poor intelligence can furnish me with a few ideas on the *Amours d’un Suisse* which I sketched out at Freiberg. I sometimes fear, my friend, that this poor intelligence is escaping me, and this will happen, I tell you, if all this squabble continues for any time longer. Adieu, to-morrow at five o’clock.”

This 27th  
April, 1760,  
at Schlettau.

I arrived at the hour stated ; the King was finishing the piece he had spoken to me about the day before.

“ Here are my *Amours suisses* finished. You see that I have worked pretty hard. I will correct them again, and you will give them to your Swiss. This piece will not be altogether bad ; it may serve to console him and recompense him for the loss of his lady which he has sustained. What do you think ? ”

‘ I believe, Sire, that he will think the piece pretty, that it will amuse him, that he will be sensible of the trouble you have taken to sing his unfortunate love affairs, but——’

“ I do not want any of your ‘ buts ’ ; you may be sure he will be pleased.”

The recompense which His Majesty had promised amounted to this jest.

“ You will be surprised perhaps that I have finished these fine love affairs so soon ; but I began them half an hour before my dinner, and I

went on with them as soon as it was over. When I have work to do, my sittings at table are very short, and my courses very few in number. Nobody, I think, could live so cheaply as I can. If I were in a position to do as I pleased, I should have a capon bought for myself, and this poor beast would feed me for three days. With my four courses, I am not so happy as I should be then, living in a simpler manner. Happy! Is this word made for me who am in the convulsions of anxiety? This word is for you, my friend, for you who have never experienced the blows of fortune.”

‘Do I not feel them, Sire, since you suffer so cruelly from them? But it will all end well.’

“You are still of good cheer, then?”

‘Very good.’

“But you must find it very tiresome with me, since I am always talking to you of my gloomy ideas! What a painful life I lead you!”

‘I think in no wise of myself, Sire; I am only concerned about Your Majesty and the hopes I have for this campaign.’

“*Faxit Deus.*”

Speaking next of his childhood and his youth, when even at that age which is called happy he had not known happiness, he agreed that in many respects he had brought on himself a host of unpleasantnesses.

“My hastiness, which was extreme, often carried me, I acknowledge, beyond bounds, *unde mala*. If, however, they had used me with a little more

gentleness, perhaps they would have managed to moderate that hastiness, for which I reproached myself in my heart, and against which I struggled with all my strength. But how difficult it is to guide and to moderate those first impressions of nature, when, by negligence or clumsiness, they have been allowed to take too great a hold in childhood.”

On this occasion, he told me this story.

“ A minister of State, whose hastiness had not been sufficiently reproved in his youth, was passing in his carriage over the great bridge of Berlin. Seeing my father, also in a carriage with a general, coming towards him, he cried out to his coachman : Stop, stop ! The coachman, not stopping soon enough, my Excellency jumps out of the carriage, swears like a man possessed, and beats the coachman in the presence of my father, who had stopped. The general who was with him said to the Excellency : ‘ Good heavens, what are you doing ? Are you forgetting yourself ; do you not see the King ? ’—‘ I see him quite well, but my coachman, this scoundrel, this b——, why does he not stop ? The rogue will be thrashed again thoroughly.’ My father, although very hasty himself, blamed the hastiness of the Excellency, and inveighed against parents who took so little trouble to restrain the impetuositities of youth, which is always made unhappy by them. That, my dear sir, is a tiny little lesson in morals. You will permit me to end with it, and to wish you good evening.”

I will not give an account here of all the conversations which I had with the King in these country billets. I will content myself with giving a summary of a few of them, and the last, which preceded our departure from Schlettau, in its entirety.

The King, after having finished his *Conte de l'amour d'un Suisse*, revised and corrected the short pieces he had composed at Grüssau in 1758, during the siege of Schweidnitz: *Les Tonneliers*, an *Epître au colonel de Balbi*, who directed the siege. He next took up his *Ode au duc Ferdinand de Brunswick*; he had already revised this piece at Freiberg, as I have said, and, if he touched it up again, I think a little ill-humour gave rise to this new revision. The King, in spite of all that he said about the French, their fickleness, their lack of desire to make peace, their unheard-of devotion to the house of Austria, who led them, he said, on a leash, flattered himself sometimes that they would come of their own accord to this so much desired peace. A letter which he received by a courier convinced him that this peace would not be made; it put him in an ill-humour, and, the following day, he revised his piece. For a whole week he was employed on nothing else in the time he gave up to his corrections. He added several strophes, into which he put all the bitterness and all the force that his imagination could supply; but these strophes were torn up and burned a fortnight later. I should have been much more

pleased with this sacrifice of his labour, if a very unpleasant circumstance had not forced him to it. What I said about the sending off of this ode<sup>1</sup> will be remembered, and the King's suspicion that Voltaire was leading up to one of his tricks. One morning I received an unsigned letter in which there was one enclosed for the King, and which read :

‘Here, sir, is a letter for His Majesty. Have the kindness to hand it to him without losing any time. It is important. His Majesty will know by other channels that this letter has been sent to you.’

I hastened to the King's quarters; he had already set out to visit the positions of the cavalry. I waited in the ante-chamber. An hour afterwards, he arrived; seeing me, he said :

“What is it that brings you here so early, my dear sir? Is it good or bad news?”

‘I hope, Sire, that it is good news. This letter will apprise you.’

He asked me into his room; opened the letter eagerly, and, having read it, his face aflame :

“What f—— letter have you brought me here?”

He tore it up and gave me the pieces. “Never bring me such scurrilities again.”

I showed him the letter which I had received. He softened after having read it.

<sup>1</sup> In 1758 [*vide* pp. 21 and 235 *supra*].



“It must be acknowledged that there are some great rascals in the world! Good day. Return at five o’clock.”<sup>1</sup>

I passed a very disagreeable day thinking over this accursed letter. What an unhappy sitting, I kept saying to myself, this evening’s will be! If His Majesty had given way to my entreaties not to send this unfortunate ode to Voltaire, he would have saved himself many anxieties; the matter will not remain there. In short, a thousand disagreeable ideas thronged into my mind until the moment when I went to the King; but to my great surprise and my great satisfaction, he did not say a word about the morning’s adventure. He was even less gloomy than on the previous days, and he only spoke of Voltaire. From several light shafts directed against the poet, I easily perceived that he suspected him of having written this shameful satire, and of having sent it to me. He praised his fine genius a great deal, and he terminated his praise and this sitting by this little story.

Voltaire, who was having a tragedy played, cried from the wings in which he was, ‘Some warmth, some warmth!’ The actors, thinking that this was meant for them, declaimed more vigorously, and Voltaire still called for warmth. At these repeated cries, the actors exerted them-

<sup>1</sup> [The German editor states in a note on this passage that, in the original, the text of the epigram contained in the letter referred to follows here; but for some reason he has not printed it.]

selves still more ; and monkey Voltaire then said to them : ‘ Oh, the devil, gentlemen, it is not you I am aiming at ; I want a chafing-dish.’

He had already told me this story several times.

The reading of the second volume of *La Manière d'étudier et d'enseigner les belles-lettres* gave him the idea of working on *L'étude des anciens et des modernes, recommandée fortement à la jeunesse* ; such was the title of this piece.

“ I do not propose here to determine the value of either and which is superior to the other. This question, which could be decided in a few words, has been discussed at too great a length and with too much heat. It is natural that the moderns should have profited by the ancients, and should have gone farther than they went in all branches of human knowledge. Thus, setting on one side this very useless question, I confine myself to recommending to young people the assiduous reading of the ancients, so that, possessing them thoroughly, they may be able to draw greater advantage from the moderns. Nothing extends our knowledge, our views and our tastes more than these well-made comparisons, and how is it possible to make them well, if you do not know thoroughly the subjects which both have treated ? I have always observed that those persons who had first of all thoroughly gone through the great works of antiquity and had afterwards compared them with modern masterpieces were fundamentally well-educated, and that this education

had a favourable influence on the whole course of their studies.”

The King next inveighed against the methods of study, against the shortness of the time given to the authors of antiquity, against the lack of trouble taken to point out their beauties and their defects, against the renderings of them given to youth, renderings which were usually too literal and trivial, and against those masters, the greater part of them without any taste, who, by their incapacity, were unable to compare the fine passages which they had construed with the passages in modern authors who have treated the same subject.

He argued in the same way on the faulty method of teaching and studying the latter.

“ If, in the study of the ancients and the moderns, this procedure, the only good one, were followed : a clear, precise and elegant understanding of the author you have in hand, an examination of the beauties and the defects of this author, a comparison of what is construed with the same subjects treated in a masterly manner, this procedure would produce the happiest effects ; youth would be better educated ; it would devote itself to reading, making this its principal object, its pleasure ; whereas we see at present this same youth taking an invincible dislike to the subjects that it has been badly taught, or on which it has been ill-advised.”

Following this was a great eulogium of M. Rollin and the Jesuits, whom he looked upon as the only

good masters for the education of youth: "Perhaps one day I shall show by means of an establishment destined for the education of my young nobility that my views on education are very like those inculcated by these great teachers I have just mentioned."<sup>1</sup>

This is as near as may be a summary of what the King had written. Assiduous reading of the ancient authors, precise and elegant rendering, and comparison with the moderns—the whole piece turns on these ideas. After this composition, the King wrote this short piece of verse which I transcribe here,<sup>2</sup> and which he gave me. The Marquis d'Argens had written to the King at Freiberg that M. Gleditsch, an academician, had sworn by all the gods that M. de Maupertuis had appeared to him in the chamber of the Academy beside a clock, and that he had seen him for several moments in succession, that all Berlin was in ecstasy over this apparition, in which he believed firmly. The King jeered at M. Gleditsch, the credulous Berliners and the Marquis who wrote him such nonsense. In passing, he gave a few pats to the president who was thus made to return from the other world. He wrote a few lines immediately after reading the Marquis's letter, but, having been interrupted, he left them, and perhaps would not have worried about them any more, if the Marquis

<sup>1</sup> The King realised his views by the establishment of the military school, of which he himself drew up the plan a few years after the war.

<sup>2</sup> [Not given in the German edition.]

had not returned to the charge with the prophets, who were announcing great events ; he then took up the lines he had begun, and finished them.

The King, at the beginning of May, received a letter while I was with him. After having read it, he came up to me, and, wringing my hand :

“ My friend, my friend, we must take courage ; fate seems to be softening and disposed to drag me from this labyrinth in which my destruction would have been decided. What a sweet satisfaction, my dear sir, to be able at last to avenge myself on these crowned brigands who wanted to destroy me ! ”

I expressed my joy at the good news which he had received, and at the expectation he had of seeing a speedy end to the misfortunes he had experienced.

“ You would never guess, my dear sir, who it is that opens for me this door to safety ? ”

‘ No, Sire.’

“ It is the Door ; it is those people who are considered barbarians. They are not so ; if they were, my enemies would be still more barbarous than they. Don’t say a word yet of all this.”

Alas ! these rose-coloured days, as he called them, did not last long ; the gloomy days re-appeared ; the King had indulged in hope too soon. In misfortune, you perceive the slightest glimpses of hope.

Such were his readings, his corrections of several pieces of verse, and his new compositions. It will

again be seen, from the details which I have just given, how this Prince profited by every moment of the day : the morning given up to his military and political affairs and to visiting the army and the positions ; the afternoon to his literary occupations, which were often interrupted by reports, to which he never failed to reply.

“ I lengthen the days and my life,” he said, “ and the moments are still too short for what I have to do ; but, in thus lengthening my life, I also increase the sum of my evils, since I am aware of them for sixteen to seventeen hours a day in succession. Count, sir : I am always up between three and four in the morning ; you have seen me at eight or nine o’clock going to seek a repose which very often I have not found ; my cares went to bed with me. Ah, what a dog of a life, my friend ! ”

During nearly the whole of our stay at Schlettau, the King’s conversations were the acme of melancholy ; sometimes they were the acme of gaiety, but these happy moments, as I have just said, were of short duration.

This 14th  
June, 1760,  
at Schlettau.

I was called on this day at two o’clock and remained until five.

“ My dear sir, the die is cast ; we start off to-morrow, to conquer or perish. When I compare my strength with that of my persecutors and I see them with 220,000 men, and I have only a third of this number to oppose them with, and, even then, what troops they are after the losses I have suffered !—do you think that I can be easy

in my mind, and that it is possible for me, during the violent crisis in which I am at present, to breathe freely? Believe me, my dear sir, the state in which I am at present is a violent one, and, in this situation, I am carried outside the rules of prudence. For me, there is at present no middle course in this horrible brawl on which I am about to enter. You will see that either great reverses or great victories await me, and, after all the misfortunes which I have experienced, my friend, can I hope for victories?"

'Sire, it is because you have had so many disasters in succession that I hope for great victories. Nothing remains long extreme; your extreme misfortunes will come to an end.'

"I see scarcely any possibility of it, my dear sir. I hoped for some time that the Crescent would do something in my favour; but the Crescent is deaf to my prayers. 'All is silent, the sea and the winds and Neptune.' There are the English remaining quietly in the Thames, and not yet sending to Germany the reinforcements which they were to bring over. Everything turns against me, and you can still hope?"

'Yes, Sire, I do not fear all these misfortunes which you look for. The number of troops does not always determine success, and is not usually the determining factor on a day of battle. I count infinitely on your genius and on the steadfastness of your soul; and then, Sire, I repeat, nothing remains long extreme.'

“ I admire you, my dear sir, with your hopes ; but I tell you again, expect nothing good ; like Cassandra, I foretell to you the misfortunes of Troy ; I have already foretold them to the good Marquis, who, like you, has hopes. Good God, hopes ! Good evening. To-morrow we march, and you will see that the play will not be long in beginning. I commend myself to your hopes and your prayers.”

This 15th  
June, 1760,  
at Schlettau.

The King sent for me at four o'clock in the morning.

“ As I may not see you this evening, I wanted to say a word to you before I put out to sea. Here then is my vessel about to wander, perhaps at the will of impetuous Eolus. What is very certain, my friend, is that the pilot is very much tossed about by his ideas. I have Silesia and Saxony to defend ; if I go to the defence of the first, I leave my troops here at the mercy of a numerous swarm of enemy troops. If I remain in Saxony, what have I not to fear for my Silesia ! Of two evils, I choose the less, and I march for Silesia, manœuvring in such a way as to run as little risk as possible. You must acknowledge that these brigands of emperors, kings, princes, and these hussies of empresses give me a great deal of trouble, and make my life horribly bitter. If, in my turn, I could make the life of all these crowned b—— who persecute me the same,—ah, Catt, what a delicious pleasure it would be ! For, although this may not be in your system of orthodoxy, believe me that vengeance



is a sweet thing ; but how can I flatter myself in my position that I shall be able to taste this delicious morsel ? On this, I wish you good day. Until this evening, if it is possible.”

We crossed the Elbe at Zehren on this day, and on the other side of the river joined the Prince of Holstein and General Count de Finckenstein, who had brought the two regiments of dragoons from the army of the allies. All the infantry was arranged in the evening in battle order and in three lines near the village of Zadel, and was all night under arms, because General de Lacy was opposite with a considerable body of troops. The King took up his quarters at Proschwitz, and I was not called.

This 15th  
June, 1760,  
at Pro-  
schwitz.

I went to the King's quarters on this day at five o'clock in the afternoon. I found him very fatigued. He had ridden for a long time in the morning.

This 16th  
June, 1760,  
at Pro-  
schwitz.

“ My dear sir, I am becoming a miserable old hack, don't you think ? I can hardly move.”

‘ You can be fatigued, Sire, without being an old hack. I have seen some of your aides-de-camp who had been galloping about a good deal.’

“ Do you mean that they were old hacks, or fatigued ? Your phrase is equivocal.”

‘ I mean fatigued.’

“ My aides-de-camp, at least some of them, are somewhat comfort-loving ; the slightest fatigue distresses them. I rather imagine that they consign all this gamble to the devil ; for my part, I

consign it to a hundred thousand, and you, to how many do you consign it ? ”

‘ To none, Sire.’

“ What, you do not consign it for me ? ”

‘ I commiserate very sincerely with Your Majesty on your difficult situation, and as the devil has nothing to do with all this gamble, I cannot consign it to him. You will do well, without turning over to him the chance of the high game you are playing.’

“ Still hopes, my dear sir ! ”

‘ Yes, Sire. Do not take them away from me, I beseech you, and, what is of still more importance to me, may you not lose them yourself.’

At this moment a letter was brought in from General de Hülsen, to which the King wrote an immediate reply.

“ Hülsen is at Meissen opposite me, and for the communications of his corps with my army, I have had bridges thrown across the Elbe.”

He made me a sketch on paper of these two bridges and of those <sup>1</sup> over which we had passed the previous day. More despatches were brought to the King.

“ You see that I am not left quiet for a moment. I must reply to all this rubbish ; so good evening and good night. Until to-morrow at five o’clock.”

<sup>1</sup> “ They are called,” he said, “ *Hibrüken* in Holland. They are made with two large boats tied by the masts, the sides and the helms. As many beams and planks are placed across them as will easily bear two divisions (*sic*) on them.”

My sitting was very short. Officers of hussars were continually being announced to the King and letters brought to him.

This 17th  
June, 1760,  
at Pro-  
schwitz.

“ You see how I am tormented, but I must put up with it all. I shall grudge no care, my friend, no trouble, however fatiguing it may be, no danger; I shall submit to everything, if only this fate which has tossed me about so much would be favourable to me for a moment, in order that I might worthily thrash my enemies who are so implacable for my destruction. Perhaps to-morrow you will see the prelude of our combats; perhaps there will be many rogues less in the world. Adieu, go and rest; we shall decamp from here at three o’clock in the morning. I cannot tell you whether I shall see you to-morrow or not, for I swear to you by all the gods that I cannot, like the learned Maupertuis, uplift my soul. Good evening.”

As I was about to go out, a peasant was brought in.

“ Remain a moment longer; I want to speak to this rogue.”

“ You must go this evening to the Austrian camp, and bring me back information about it.”

‘ No, Your Majesty, I don’t wish to go there; I should be hanged.’

“ Well, if you do not go, I shall have your house burned down.”

‘ Your Majesty can do what he pleases; but I do not wish to be hanged; and you cannot dispose of my life at your pleasure.’

“ You are right.”

The King dismissed him, and explained to me the conversation, which I had not understood.

“ That,” he said, “ is a very firm and resolute rogue ; he was not, moreover, altogether wrong. It’s a dog’s pleasure being hanged. Now, this time, good evening.”

This 18th  
June, 1760,  
at Radeburg.

At three o’clock in the morning, the King marched in three columns to Radeburg ; the first went to Jessen, Gross-Döbritz, Nauenhof towards Beerwalde ; the second marched through Marschau, Lauterbach and Ober-Ebersbach ; the third column, Laubach, Basslitz, Böhla, Ermensdorf, Beyersdorf, Mittel-Ebersbach and Ober-Rädern. The King met on his march some light enemy troops ; he gave chase to them with his advance-guard, took 300 of them, Croats, Uhlans, Pandours and Hungarian infantry. The rest of the fugitives retired on the large corps of M. de Lacy, encamped at the foot of the hills of Bernsdorf and of Reichenberg, near Berbisdorf. He encamped his army in five lines between Radeburg and Beerwalde, and set up his quarters in the first place. His Majesty sent for all the generals and subordinate officers. He told them all that he intended on the morrow to march on M. de Lacy, and to attack him in his position, that he hoped that they would all do their duty and prove themselves worthy of the name of Prussian ; that, for his part, he would not spare his person, and that they would always see him prepared to shed his blood for the salvation

of the country, that officers of all grades who distinguished themselves could expect distinguished rewards, but also the mark of infamy if they did not do their duty, that he would admit no excuse. Finally, he recommended the subordinate officers to keep their soldiers well in hand, especially the new troops which they had not had time to train thoroughly.

“Adieu, gentlemen,” he said to them, “I count on your affection for the country and on your zeal for my person.”

Such was the speech made by the King, a summary of which he gave me. He repeated it to me himself at six o'clock, when I was called.

“To-morrow, my dear sir, M. de Lacy and I will be at loggerheads. If I can thrash him thoroughly, as I hope to do, it will do me good. I made a speech to my officers, not at the head of the troops, as we are told the ancients did, but at the main guard of the camp, after having reconnoitred the enemy. I have every reason to believe that they were moved by my words and by the assurance which I gave them of the marks of distinction which would be theirs who did their duty, and of indignation for those who failed of it. I have given orders to General Hülsen to join me with a part of the corps which he has under his command. All my arrangements are made, and I am entirely at your disposition.”

At this moment, his aide-de-camp, Dyhern, was announced,

“Eh, the devil, they will not leave me quiet. Let him enter.—What do you want?”

‘Sire, General Hülsen’s corps will not be able to arrive here until night.’

“Good, provided it arrives, that is enough for me. Good evening.”

This Dyherrn gave him the idea of speaking to me of one of his relations, General Dyherrn.

“He was a great unbeliever, by vanity. He was afterwards converted, on the same principle. I do not like those ways. If I believed firmly, my dear sir, all that you believe, I should be as sincere as it is possible to be. You would see me at the foot of the altars as assiduously as anybody, and I would die like a zealous Calvinist. Voltaire will die like a coward, in the hands of a few wretched Cordeliers. You will certainly hear that in the article of death he will affect piety. I know him; he believes nothing, and he fears everything. For myself, my dear sir, what I believe, I believe sincerely. I am not convinced of the immortality of the soul. As for the world, I think it is eternal. If there is a providence, as many things indicate, there are nevertheless a large number of difficulties which no Calvinist can solve. The wisest and the surest course, however, is to be an upright man. But we must go to bed and be up in a few hours. I have made my bark as shipshape as possible. I did a little boasting to-day, when assuring my officers that all would go off wonderfully well. You must not show either your fears

or all your cards. Good evening and good night. Keep your hands raised to heaven to-morrow, and be very careful not to let them fall."

If the King had inspired the generals and other officers of the army whom he had harangued with his confidence of success, he had not produced the same confidence in headquarters. On leaving him, I was surrounded by a crowd of officers who were not at all in favour of the battle which was to be fought on the morrow.

'Why this battle? Why risk things like this? The ground leading to the enemy is difficult. The position of General Lacy is formidable; Marshal Daun has certainly marched to support Lacy. Instead of having one army to fight, we shall have two on our hands, and haven't we had enough reverses, without trying to expose ourselves to others still?'

All saw black.

'Gentlemen,' I said to them, 'I know neither the roads nor General Lacy's position; but what I can tell you is that the King, who has thoroughly reconnoitred the enemy and his position, thinks it attackable, and that he is very tranquil about the result. Good evening, gentlemen. Until to-morrow, when we shall know more than to-day.'

Towards two o'clock in the morning, we marched on the enemy. Our hussars stationed in advanced positions gave word that M. de Lacy was no longer there; deserters confirmed this news. They said that their general had decamped at

This 19th  
June, 1760,  
at Radeburg.

midnight, and had gone, as they had heard, to cover the right of Marshal Daun in the position at Lausa. The King, on this news, took several battalions of grenadiers, dragoons and hussars, and went with them in pursuit of the enemy, some of whom he took prisoners. He had his troops occupy the ground which the enemy had left; the right wing extended as far as Berbigdorf, behind which is a great wood which extends beyond Moritzburg, to Dresden. The left wing rested on Radeburg. General Hülsen received orders to start off again on the same day for the old camp at Proschwitz, in order that he might be within supporting distance of Colonel de Linden who was encamped on the other side of the Elbe, and might cover the bakery, which was still at Meissen.

After all these arrangements, the King returned to Radeburg with his suite. He assured me that the army in general burned with the desire to fight, and that the enemy, who had decamped like cowards, were unanimously qualified as poltroons by it.

At six o'clock, I was called. The King seemed to me in a very bad humour. He scolded all his people who did badly, or with a slowness which exasperated him, all that he commanded them to do. A glass of water asked for did not come quickly enough; an aide-de-camp was not at hand at a moment when he should have been; the letters which were brought in for signature should



have been sent off a long while ago ; his impatience was extreme.

“ You see me very uneasy and very gloomy (I saw it but too well) ; my stroke missed fire, my dear sir, sadly missed fire ; I have a great desire to hang myself. Have you never had that desire ? ”

‘ No, Sire, and I shall never have it. You have several times told me that it is a great folly to hang yourself, and that there were other means of getting rid of yourself, if you had a fancy that way.’

“ Look how ill-luck pursues me, however. There is every probability of beating Lacy, and he must needs escape me. Perhaps the advance-guard went too far forward on the day before. Whatever it may be, my fate is not worth envying. Would you envy it as you see me now ? ”

He did not give me time to answer him.

“ You would indeed be very mad if you could envy an unfortunate like myself. What is the use of this glory which is cried up so much ? If you are a great man, what does it amount to, when you are dead ? A great man, moreover, is not considered and judged to be so until he has passed beyond the walls of the world.”

On this, I told him that there was one whom I had the honour of knowing, and who was considered great during his lifetime. He gave vent to a deep sigh, and looked at me rather fixedly.

“ Adieu, my dear sir. I am tired out with fatigue and melancholy. I am going to bed,

without hope of much rest. Don't forget to bring me a rope to-morrow."

He smiled, however, at this word.

During our stay at Radeburg, there were frequent alarms which led to nothing. My sittings continued at the same hour, they were always very doleful, but that of the 25th was distressing.

24th June.

The enemy had fired a salvo for a victory. In spite of all the trouble we took, we could not learn the reason of this rejoicing; we were lost in conjecture; but in the evening we were unhappily informed. Towards eight o'clock in the evening of this day, an officer of the advanced posts of the enemy desired to speak to one of ours.

'I am sorry,' the Austrian said to him, 'to have to acquaint you with bad news. General Loudon has taken General Fouqué with all his corps. It was for this fine stroke that we fired the salvo of rejoicing.'

On hearing of this catastrophe, the officer sent word to headquarters so that His Majesty might be apprised. As he was asleep, the aide-de-camp who was on duty waited until the following morning to make this sad report.

This 25th  
June.

'The King,' said the aide-de-camp to me, 'was struck by this news as by lightning,' and so struck that for several minutes he remained motionless, looking at the aide-de-camp with that air of astonishment which betokened the deepest sorrow.

"Fouqué taken, his corps taken, is it possible?"

That is all he said to the officer.

“*Schon gut.*”

The King sent for me at nine o'clock. He seemed to me more tranquil in his sorrow than I had ever seen him on similar occasions, and this affected me all the more; no talk of barbarians, brigands, strumpets who wanted to destroy him.

This 25th  
June, 1760,  
in the  
morning at  
Radeburg.

“My good Catt,” he said, “acknowledge that I am very unfortunate. My life is really becoming very burdensome to me. How fate persecutes me in my old age! Without some great blow, there are no means of extricating myself! You could not believe what I am suffering; how everything revolts in me; and how much a man laments when he is as filled as I am with the honour of saving the country. Here at this moment, I must put a good face on it; ah, but at what a cost, my friend!”

All this was said with many pauses, and sighing all the while. The more I saw the King suffering this disaster without railing at fortune, and as he suffered those attacks of gout, during which he was gentleness itself, the more was I distressed by this misfortune and by the way in which he bore it. I shed tears; the King saw them, and, placing his hand on my shoulder:

“You are not tiring then, my dear sir, of an unfortunate man. How different you are from those friends who abandon those who are useless to them or who are bowed down beneath the weight of misfortune. Yet this is what I see every day. Do me the pleasure of returning this evening at five o'clock. I am going for a ride on my horse to

endeavour to divert myself, if possible, from my sorrowful ideas, and to see what is happening.”

This 25th  
June, 1760,  
in the even-  
ing at  
Radeburg.

I went at the appointed hour, but only to learn that after midnight we should march rearwards for a distance of a mile.

“ I was not capable of anything at all to-day. My poor head is so confused that it is incapable of supplying me with ideas. Perhaps it will recover.”

‘ It is not for your head, Sire, that I fear, but for your health, which is so essential at the present moment ! ’

“ Eh, my friend, you flatter me ; if I cannot finish this harsh task, many others will finish it for me, and will perhaps come off better than I can out of all this frightful brawl.”

‘ I doubt it very much, Sire.’

“ And I, I do not doubt it. They say to kings, what would happen to the State if Your Majesty should be taken away ? And the States go on just the same whether they live or die. Often even after their death things go on better than while they were alive.”

I would have pointed out here the difference in the two cases, but he wished me good evening.

“ I must sleep a little.”

26th June,  
1760, at  
Gross-  
Döbritz  
head-  
quarters.

We decamped from Radeburg at one A.M. to march to Gross-Döbritz, where the army encamped on the mountains between this place and Hohen-dorf. The right wing rested on Gross-Döbritz ; behind this village was constructed a three-hundred-

foot abattis, on which soldiers from all parts of the army worked ; they received four groschen a day. The left wing, extending to Hohendorf, was furnished with redoubts and heavy artillery. Before the front of the camp, large batteries were set up ; everything was entrenched. Behind the left wing, at Grossenhayn, the bakery was established.

The King did not send for me on this first day of his arrival. He suffered very much from a hemorrhoidal colic, which his people called an indigestion colic. On the following day I had orders to be at His Majesty's quarters at four o'clock.

“ Yesterday, my dear sir, I suffered all the afternoon from a frightful colic ; how can I be well with the confounded life I lead ! We are here in a good camp, where we shall remain a few days yet very quietly, I think, provided no new misfortunes are announced. My door is never opened without my saying to myself, here is some bad news. I bless heaven when, on entering, the messenger only apprises me of small losses. Have you any idea of the state of my mind ! Was there ever anything like it ? I must put a good face on it, however, and, by heavens ! I will do so until my last breath.

“ This cruel and distressing affair of my dear Fouqué upsets all my plans entirely. At present, I can abandon Saxony less than ever, unless by my skill I can induce the consecrated hat to follow me wherever I like to march. I have as yet no

details of the disaster of my friend ; he must have been unfortunate and have succumbed, for what can valour do against numbers ! But I am very sure that he defended himself like a brave officer, and certainly did not surrender like those rogues at Maxen. I know my Fouqué of old. He is one of the bravest and the most intelligent officers I have had since fatal circumstances have forced me into war ; but is he still alive ? ”

The King was very gloomy during the whole of this evening ; he was somewhat less so in the two sittings which followed, but when, on the 29th, he had details of the taking of his dear Fouqué, his melancholy increased exceedingly, and the expression he gave to it was violent.

He sent for me at seven o'clock.

This 29th  
June, 1760,  
at Gross-  
Döbritz.

“ I have news which will horrify you. Loudon and his colleagues behaved like barbarians. After the taking of Fouqué, they sacked Landshut in an infamous and unheard-of manner, which you will hardly believe, and which any upright and sensitive soul could never imagine. The generals even applauded and smiled at the cruelty and excesses of the brigands who were pillaging this poor town. They only gave quarter to the extremely poor, a fine excess of barbarity ; it cries for vengeance. If I can carry out a striking vengeance, it shall be exercised on these madmen and on those who egged them on to their cruelties and their misdeeds. I have told you before, my dear sir, that a war which is only carried on barbarously ruins all morals,

and makes of man a savage being ; it makes him brutal, ferocious and barbarous. I cannot tell you, my dear sir, how strong my indignation and anger are.”

The King had no need to tell me ; I saw it only too well. His state distressed me, and I shuddered to think of the reprisals which would not be lacking, when occasion offered. He strode up and down his room several times, repeating :

“ Is this making war ; is this behaving like men, like officers who, though brought up on carnage, respect nevertheless the unfortunate, and succour them ! ”

On the following day, the King again returned to the charge, with as great a violence as the day before ; he did not spare his sarcasms.

This 30th  
June, 1760,  
at Gross-  
Döbritz.

“ Acknowledge that these b—— did not have such a difficult job to capture the corps of my poor Fouqué, 28,000 men against 8000 ; there is nothing in that to go into ecstasies about ; this is inexpensively making a brilliant reputation in the eyes of the ignorant. Leave these ferocious brutes to their pride, to their cruelties ; let them strut about over their successes, their pillages and their brigandage. Perhaps I shall have my revenge, and, without being barbarians like them, I shall make them feel very sharply what should not be done.

“ Did I not say that Fouqué would behave like a man of honour, and that he would give a striking example of what valour and steadfastness can do

against numbers? He acted like a Roman. From two o'clock in the morning until ten, he did everything that skill, prudence, combined with courage, could do in so desperate a situation. He received two wounds; I am informed that he will get over them all right; I was extremely uneasy on his account. You do not easily find such another man. For the rest, the enemy suffered rather considerable losses. I will speak to you to-morrow of this sad and barbarous adventure. Good evening. I have still several letters to write."

This 1st  
July, 1760,  
at Gross-  
Döbritz.

There was no mention this day, on which I was called at two o'clock, of anything concerning the losses which the enemy had suffered, and this gave me pleasure, for it pained me to see the King becoming heated with the account of this affair.

"I sent for you early, my dear sir, in order to tell you that we shall march in the night; so make your arrangements. You will have for these all the time you need. I want to try to take M. de Lacy by the ears; if I can lengthen them considerably for him, this will be a mitigation of my troubles. I am going for a ride on my horse and to bed on my return. Good day and good evening. Pray a little for us all."

On leaving the King, I went to see M. de Gaudi,<sup>1</sup> his aide-de-camp. As this shrewd and clever officer kept a journal of the campaign, and details of all that happened in the army and the detached corps were sent to him regularly, I begged him to

<sup>1</sup> Whom General Hülsen had sent to the King with a report.



give me an account of the Landshut affair, which he obligingly did.

‘The King is furious,’ he said to me, ‘at this unheard-of pillaging affair at Landshut. He is in the worst humour in the world. He snubs everybody,—have you not noticed it?’

‘I saw that he was rather upset; how could he be otherwise? For it was a great loss.’

‘It is much greater than he imagines. This is the tragic story of it. General Fouqué, with a corps of 8000 men at the most, was stationed near Landshut in an entrenched camp. We went over this position, you will remember, when we encamped near Reichhennersdorf. The general had taken this camp in order to have communications with Glatz by way of Bohemia. He knew that the enemy were aiming at this place. Loudon, who saw through M. de Fouqué’s plans, and aware of the necessity of driving him from his position, attacked him at two o’clock in the morning of the 23rd, with five corps and in five places. General Wolfersdorff attacked along the river Bober through Reichhennersdorf; General Janus on the other side of the village; General Gaisruck along the village of Zieder; Loudon and General Müffling, three times as strong as General Fouqué, enveloped the Prussian battalions stationed at long intervals on the heights of Buch and drove them through Nieder-Zieder.

‘Loudon then sent off his cavalry to cut off the retreat to Schweidnitz and Breslau; Fouqué was

driven back as far as the river Bober between Landshut and Breitenau, and in this fine retreat of his he was wounded and taken. He fought valiantly, as did his troops; in disaster itself, he has covered himself with immortal glory. We lost nearly 8000 men, 40 cannons and 24 flags. The enemy lost 2900 men. Of our 8000 men, 6000 were taken prisoners. That is the truth of the affair; but don't speak of it to any one, I beg you. I am awaiting orders from the King to rejoin General Hülsen.'

This 2nd  
July, 1760,  
at Quolsdorf  
head-  
quarters.

At two o'clock in the morning, the army marched in three columns to the camp at Quolsdorf; the first column through Nieder-Ebersbach, Kunersdorf, Lötschen, Sacka and Röhrsdorf; the second column marched through Bieberach, Mühlbach, Tiendorf, Welkander and Sella; the third column through Grossenhayn to Schönfeld, Lüttichau and Zochau, to the camp.

The camp was pitched on the mountain before Quolsdorf, the left wing stretching towards Zietsch, and the right towards the little town of Krakau; before the front was a small river called Pulsnitz. For two days the army received biscuit instead of bread.

The King, whom I saw at four o'clock in the afternoon, was not in the least in the humour of the preceding days; his gaiety, real or affected, gave me pleasure.

“Although as tired as a dog of the march we have done, I am yet well. The idea of giving

M. de Lacy a little thrashing puts me in good spirits; I am delighted at it; and I give myself up to this pleasant idea. It is high time I had some sort of good fortune; my troops and myself would be all the better for it in this campaign."

Hearing this language, I said to myself: you should not sell the bear's skin before you have brought it down; and I smiled.

"What are you laughing at, my dear sir."

'Because Your Majesty is pleased; I earnestly wish that your hopes will not be frustrated.'

"I wish it still more than you; I think you do not doubt this. I had last night a very singular dream; but do not go and think that I put the slightest faith in the extravagances of a dream. I dreamed, then, that I was at Strasburg with Marshal Daun, who suddenly, without my knowing how, was transported with me to Charlottenberg. There I saw my father and old Dessau. 'Have I behaved well?' I said to the latter.—'Very well.'—'You delight me; your approbation and that of my father please me more than the approval of the whole universe.'—As I was saying this, there came a hussar who announced that the French were on the march. 'Should I attack?' I asked the old prince. 'Yes.'

"And thereupon, my dear sir, I awoke; can there be anything stranger than this dream? Well, then, would you believe that, strange and extravagant as it is, for many people who had had

such a dream it would be food for fear or hope, the one as mad as the other.”

After the story of the dream, the King read me Gresset's *Chartreuse*, the greater part of which he recited by heart; he put especial stress on these lines :

Que le palais le plus pompeux  
Souvent renferme un misérable.

“ But, sir, you do not say a word about what I am reciting, and yet I have recited a goodly number of lines to you without looking at the book.”

‘ I admire your memory, and if I attempted to express to you my admiration for everything that was worthy of it, I should overwhelm you with my admiration.’

He made me a very fine bow.

“ A truce to praise, sir; you would spoil me. Let us see about getting a little rest in the arms of divine Morpheus, for to-morrow we shall do without His Divinity. Good evening, my friend, sleep well, and do not dream of battles.”

This 3rd  
July, 1760,  
at Quolsdorf  
head-  
quarters.

The King went out riding in the morning; he sent off a good many orders on his return, and at six o'clock in the evening he sent for all his generals, to whom he communicated his idea of attacking M. de Lacy on the morrow.

“ I hope,” said the King, “ that every one will do his duty. I will certainly do mine. Here is the order of the attack; let each one of you implant it firmly in his mind, so that you will conduct yourselves as if at manœuvres at Potsdam.”

All assured His Majesty that they would not spare themselves, and that they would prove themselves worthy of the Prussian name which they had the honour to bear.

He seemed delighted with this language, made to all the finest compliments in the world, and embraced the generals who were the nearest to him. General de Zieten, who, in his simple, homely language, had shown more zeal perhaps than the others, was also the most embraced and clasped. The worthy and respectable old man, on leaving the King, did several skips such as a young man might have done; he took hold of one of the generals, and made him do the same, shouting: 'Long live our good, our dear, our great King! Who would not sacrifice himself for him!'

These skips and shouts were perceived and heard by the King, who was touched by them, as the lackey told me who ordered me to go immediately to the King.

I perceived, on entering, the emotion of the Monarch.

"You see me transported with what I have seen. I sent for my generals; I gave them my instructions for the battle we shall fight to-morrow; my good old Zieten especially skipped with joy just as a young man would do who was going to a festival. You might have said that he wanted to communicate to all those who surrounded him his courage and his zeal. What an excellent man this brave Zieten is! Pack up your effects, my dear sir,

and go and rest. Neither you nor I will have any time to lose, for I am starting to-night. A little luck, my friend, a little luck, and everything will be put right. Good evening; if I can, we shall see each other again to-morrow.”

This 4th  
July, 1760,  
at Pulsnitz  
head-  
quarters.

The tents were already struck at nine o'clock in the evening; the army, after midnight, set out in three columns towards Lichtenberg, where General Lacy was stationed with his corps on some mountains and hills, having before his front defiles, woods and marshes.

The first column went through Steinborn, Stentz, passed near Lausnitz and arrived at Lomnitz; the second column marched straight on Königsbrück, Höckendorf and Gross - Nauendorf; the third column passed near Schmorke, Weissbach, Reichenau near Hohen-Eule, and went to Mittelbach. As the enemy had retired with so much precipitation that we could not come up with him, the King marched to Pulsnitz, where he pitched his camp, the right wing touching this town, and the left wing, Staffenberg-Grund. We took in this march 200 men of the enemy rear-guard, hussars and uhlans. His Majesty lodged in the castle,<sup>1</sup> in which a room was assigned to me. Either because the King was a little indisposed, of which I could not make certain, although lodging in the same spot, or because he did not wish to speak to me of the clever manœuvre of General Lacy, who had

<sup>1</sup> Belonging to Colonel de Gersdorff, in the service of Saxony. He had sent in his resignation after the taking of the Saxons at Pirna.

escaped him, and whom he thought he was on the point of beating thoroughly, he did not send for me; he sent me word only by the messenger that I should go to bed, since we should start off again in the night, and that I should be prepared to lodge on the following day with some old nuns.

At two o'clock in the morning, the army marched to the left in three columns to the camp near Marienstern; the first column took the main road through Rehnsdorf, Elster and Kriepitz; the second went through Mersdorf, Poritz and Banschwitz; the third marched through Weisbach, Niedergersdorf, Prieditz and Miltitz to the camp; the left wing touched the Marienstern monastery, and the right wing the village of Kannewitz. Before the village were two large redoubts and some ravelins constructed formerly by the Swedish general, de Moltke, at the time when the Swedes were in Saxony; behind the front was Kamenz and the Elster.

At three o'clock in the morning, the army started to march for the camp of Nieder-Gurk; the first column passed Mecknitz, Milkwitz, Bornitz, Dallwitz and Doberschütz; the second column went through Lauske, Luga, Quoas, Radibor, Klein-Dubrau and Piskowitz; the third column took its way through Buschwitz, Uebigau, Luppe, Lomske and Leichnam for the camp; the right wing before Doberschütz and the left wing on the mountain of the mill of Malschwitz. It was almost the same camp which His Majesty took after the

This 5th  
July, 1760,  
at Marien-  
stern.

This 6th  
July, 1760,  
at Nieder-  
Gurk head-  
quarters.

battle of Hochkirchen ; the latter camp was on the hills, and, on this day, we camped in the plain. We lost in this march nearly 200 men, struck with apoplexy, the heat being extreme. I was not called on this day ; the King, fatigued and overheated by the march and the heat, had a violent headache, which obliged him to go to bed.

This 7th  
July, 1760,  
at Nieder-  
Gurk.

At four o'clock in the afternoon, I had orders to appear ; he was in a very bad humour over all that had happened in the morning.

“ Yesterday, my dear sir, I was ill all day and incapable of doing anything at all ; my head was so confused that I could not string two ideas together. These are the effects of the fine life I am leading. Does not this life delight you ? ”

‘ No, Sire, I see nothing very pleasant in it.’

“ Say ‘ pleasant,’ I beg you ; I see nothing in it but what is frightful, and you will say *bene, recte et rectissime.*”



## SUPPLEMENTARY PAGES

AFTER the battle of Palzig given and lost so singularly, His Majesty left his Dürings-Vorwerk army, the command of which he handed over to Prince Henry, his brother, and, taking command of the Prince's army, joined General Wedell and marched on the Russians. I besought him to permit me to accompany him.—“Why,” he said, “should I fatigue you and expose you without any reason? Remain with my brother's army, where you will be quieter.”—The King has therefore been accused very unjustly of liking to fatigue and expose those who were not soldiers. He always had the same consideration for me; it was only after many prayers that he permitted me to follow him to Zorndorf; he commiserated with me for having been present at the battle of Hochkirchen; he several times said to me during the difficult marches which preceded the battle of Liegnitz: “I should be delighted to be able to send you safely to Glogau with Sir Andrew Mitchell; but you would not be able to get through.”

After this unlooked-for battle, he sent me to Breslau, to permit me to recover from the hardships we had suffered; they had been extremely great. He sent me there again when, with the

Russians, he did those difficult marches to drive Marshal Daun from the neighbourhood of Schweidnitz. It was these absences at different times which procured for me his letters to me. These absences prove the kindness and consideration of the King and the injustice of those who thought that he wanted everybody to fight. It is the fate of great men to be criticised. He certainly suffered this fate ; he knew it and forgave, and very seldom complained.

1760, 27th  
August.  
The King  
takes the  
troops of the  
Prince, his  
brother,  
marches to-  
wards  
Schweidnitz,  
etc.

In great misfortunes, we believe in prophets, dreams and devils. The whole army spoke of nothing but prophets. Some swore by the prophets of Berlin ; others by the Silesians. One of these latter, whose rare talents were much praised, finally won the suffrage of all. He announced a battle near Schweidnitz on the 18th August. The rumour spread ; everybody was extremely delighted. Those who were to take no part in the battle counted the moments ; soldiers awaited it in silence. On the 18th, the band of lying prophets was confounded, and they still believed in prophets.

29th August.

There was no possibility of inducing Marshal Daun to accept battle. The care with which he continued to perch himself on the mountains made him unattackable. The King manœuvred to no purpose, and became anxious about the end of the campaign. Before the battle of Liegnitz, he lodged in a suburb in a house intended for the mad.—“ You see me, my dear sir, in amusing

quarters," he said to me. "If I make a stupid blunder, I shall be within reach here, and I shall increase the number of these unfortunate people. Indeed, with so many anxieties and labours, my head could very easily be turned! If this happens to me, pray for me."

No one, I think, is ignorant of the fact that a learned Frenchman<sup>1</sup> claims that a man can exalt his soul, and in this exaltation read the future. If the president had had this fortunate gift, he would have saved himself many anxieties. The King often made fun of this notion of the philosopher: "Where the deuce did he fish it up from? You must acknowledge that it is ridiculous."

#### Cannonade.

25th Sep-  
tember.

The King had been warned at different times 2nd October. that the Austrians had sent off a strong expedition under the command of General Lacy, and that he was marching rapidly on Berlin. His Majesty gave no credence to these warnings, and there was reason for the outcry at his incredulity. Finally, he was convinced, but too late. General Lacy had gained several marches on the King; he arrived at Berlin, with Count Tottleben, commanding a Russian corps.

He set out with all his army to go to the aid of the capital; but General Lacy, who had a long start of the King, had time to arrive there, to stay there, and to make his demands and destroy what he could. Without Count Tottleben, General Lacy

<sup>1</sup> [Maupertuis.]

would have left on Berlin the traces of the laws of war and the proofs of a mind exasperated with the King, who had, however, after the affair at Gottesberg, shown him a consideration which the general certainly did not deserve. His Majesty sent back to him all that he could find of his equipments, which the hussars had taken. Count Lacy wrote a letter to him which made Prince Liechtenstein, to whom he showed it, ashamed for him. The Prince told this to a friend, who communicated the anecdote to me. His Majesty, reading the letter in my presence, said: "M. de Lacy has no manners; but reply very politely to him."—The general's letter, and the reply which the King condescended to make it, will be seen at the end of this work.<sup>1</sup>

This 24th  
November.

It is true that Berlin, after the departure of the Russians and the Austrians, offered but very melancholy traces of what it formerly had been.

The town was for several days in a state of most cruel anxiety. There were too few troops to save it. They held out for several days. The exasperated enemy threw 1500 bombs which made no effect. The town capitulated. The Russians and the Austrians entered; but Count Tottleben was master. Generals Tschernyschew and Lacy were fortunately held in check by the leader of the Cossacks. What alarm, what grief was there among the inhabitants of this unfortunate capital;

<sup>1</sup> [These letters were not added.]

what tears shed over the fate of the King ; what a number of his subjects groaned in secret to see his enemies in the heart of his States, dictating laws, punishing his subjects, and making their demands as masters ! If wretches were seen in the capital pointing out to the enemy stores intended for the army, there were also seen a large number of citizens zealous in their efforts to check violence and to save what belonged to the King and the army. Among these brave and worthy subjects should not be forgotten the banker Gotzkowsky, who, at the peril of his life even, or of being led off captive, did all that was humanly possible to stop the horrors with which they were threatened. The envoy of Holland, M. de Verelst, behaved in such a way as to deserve the kindest affection of the King, the royal family and the Prussians. Therefore His Majesty, touched by all that this excellent man had done, said to me with tears in his eyes : “ The royal family, myself and the Prussians owe altars to this worthy minister.”—I venture to assert that most citizens forgot their private griefs in their concern for the King’s, and could not bear the enemy’s having made himself master of the capital. They saw humiliation for themselves in the grief which the King must have felt.

The Russians, who were thought to be so cruel and barbarous, nevertheless saved the town from the horrors with which the Austrians threatened it. They kept an admirable order, while the latter committed the most unheard-of outrages in the

royal residences in the outskirts of the town. Will posterity be able to believe that they turned the chambers of the King and Queen into privies, in which they deposited their filth? Will it be able to believe that several apartments were used as stables, and, finally, will it believe that the enemy's resentment extended even to the statues, which were all mutilated? The Goths, those barbarians, committed the same excesses at Rome. I know that it will be said that these were reprisals for the residences of Count de Brühl, which the Prussians had sacked and ruined; but would these extremities have been resorted to if the count had not had inserted in the gazettes that the King had ordered the pillage of one of his residences? This was false. Perhaps it would have been greater to despise the outcries and the writings of a minor individual who was endeavouring to meddle with a great king than to teach him not to impose on the public; but, even supposing that His Majesty, without any reason, had ordered these excesses, should the minister, if he had been the true friend of the Saxons and of their king, have ordered, in turn, the plundering of the royal houses? Should he not have presumed that the consequence of these plunderings would be the devastation of the residences of the King of Poland and a juster resentment against the country of Saxony? When the Austrians and the Russians learned that the King was advancing on the capital, they began to think of retreat; each of the corps rejoined

its respective army. His Majesty marched to the Elbe, which he crossed above Dessau, and turned the Austrian army, which was encamped on the heights of Torgau. Everything seemed to be so contrived as to assure the King of a brilliant success; but two incidents made the battle stubborn and sanguinary, especially for the Prussians.

Battle of  
Torgau, 3rd  
November,  
1760.

The King was to attack the front of the Austrian army, supported, or within reach of the support of the cavalry, led by the Duke de Holstein. General Zieten was to take the enemy in the rear. It had been agreed that, as soon as one began the attack, the other should follow. His Majesty, as he approached the Austrians, heard heavy firing, and believed that the brave General Zieten was already engaged: first misfortune. He advanced rapidly, deployed and formed up under the cannon of the enemy. The Prussians under the fire of canister gave way. The cavalry was ordered up; but the cavalry was not to be found. The Duke had taken bad guides; entangled in a wood, he could not get out, and had to return the way he came: second misfortune. This very necessary cavalry, arriving in time, would have supported the Prussians exterminated by the cannonade, and would have stopped the attack of the Austrian cavalry. However, the King rallied and restored the courage of his troops, and led them on to the attack for the third time. At last, the cavalry arrived; General Zieten attacked, and, in the horrors of the night, the lost advantage of the day

was restored. The Prussians marched forward, without knowing whether they had the enemy or their own people in front of them. The King, whose presence of mind never left him in the greatest misfortunes, struck up the march of his troops, which was answered. Assured by this that they were Prussians, they joined up with them, and drove before them everything that came in their way. Marshal Daun had received a slight wound; taken to the rear, he consoled himself for his wound with the idea that the King was beaten. Several generals and the Princes of Saxony, about the wounded marshal, congratulated him on his victory. M. Pirch, aide-de-camp of His Majesty, was brought to him. His Excellency said to him: 'Well, your master is beaten then! What will become of him?'—Scarcely had he finished, when the firing drew nearer: 'What does all this mean? Is your king not satisfied? Does he want to exterminate the whole universe to-day?'—The thing was becoming serious; and the Marshal began to think it was time he was carried off; the Princes did not forget to follow him; every one retired in disorder to Torgau. They crossed the Elbe during the night, and the King of Prussia was master of the battlefield. Imagine what would have been the result of this day's fighting, without the two incidents which I have related, and what would have become of the Austrians, who had to cross the Elbe on pontoons! In this way, fate often mocks at all the measures



and the prudence of mortals. His Majesty suffered great losses in his infantry.<sup>1</sup> He received a bullet which grazed his chest, but the wound was a slight one, and had no consequences. The Austrians, to avenge their lost battle, gave out that the King had not been wounded, and that they knew from a sure source that he did not expose himself. This accusation was unjust and unheard-of, and I do not doubt but that it would have been punished, if the court of Vienna had known its author. His Majesty had given proofs of his bravery; and if he had not exposed himself so cruelly sometimes, in spite of the entreaties of officers and soldiers, who would have ventured to say in the presence of a whole army: 'The King exposes himself; he does not spare himself'? The soldiers, who are quite well aware who are the brave and who the timid, would have soon fixed the place of the King. This Prince was informed of this incident, but he laughed at it, and put in his account that he had won the battle only because Marshal Daun had been wounded.

The fruit of this day's work was that we were able to spread out and hibernate in Saxony, instead

<sup>1</sup> Among the brave officers whom he lost should not be forgotten Count d'Anhalt, a man of parts and merit. His brother, Count Frederick, distinguished himself greatly in this battle, always within sight of the King, always at hand to give his orders. His Majesty honoured him with the order *pour le mérite*. He spoke to me of the count at Leipzig with the greatest praise: "The friendship which I have always had for the count, that which he has constantly shown towards me, does not lead me astray." In saying that the count combined the approbation of the King with that of all those who knew him, I only relate what the whole army thought about him,

of falling back beneath the cannon of Magdeburg, and to rest the troops in this country, where there were still many resources. A corps was pushed forward to occupy Dippoldiswalde and to bring about the fall of Dresden ; but it arrived too late. The place was taken by the commandant of the said town, who marched there as soon as he heard of the disaster which had befallen the Queen's troops and that Marshal Daun was falling back.

22nd March,  
1761.

His Majesty had left me at Leipzig for three weeks, to await there several persons who were to speak to me of certain things that concerned him.

31st August.

The Russians camped at Striegau, and the Austrians at Kunzendorf, resolved to attack the King. His Majesty fortified his camp, and rendered it formidable. He was obliged to take his precautions, since he was so inferior to these two combined armies. Never before had this Prince been so active or taken more pains to triumph. Believing himself to be too far off, at Bunzelwitz, from his army, he came nearer to it. He encamped in a wood, and every night went from there to sleep on straw in the great battery of Jauernik, where he thought his presence to be more necessary. He sent me to Schweidnitz, whence I came each day to visit him in his tent. Each moment a general battle was expected. The King especially was convinced that it would take place. The Russians, in fact, had drawn up the plan of the attack. The generals were to open their instructions at nine o'clock in the evening,

and to march ; but the army received orders to remain quiet. The mistrust between the Russian and the Austrian general, the fear perhaps of the risks to be run in giving battle, stopped the enemy in their plan of attack. The King was distressed about this. "He was sure," he often said to me, "that the enemy would lose their best troops in the attack."—He who could have read the future would have perhaps seen misfortunes where His Majesty saw a decisive blow for the end of the war. It is true that his camp was a respectable one ; but if unfortunately they had given way at one point of this camp, what would have become of the others ? Men lose their nerve all the more easily and become alarmed much more readily, when, thinking themselves in safety, they see the tempest gather, advance and threaten. At any rate, it is certain that the slaughter would have been terrible, and that the attitude and the manœuvres of the King with respect to these two armies were admirable and admired. In spite of all his cares, his fatigues, his rides and his vigilance, he found time to read all the harangues of Cicero and the *Nature of the Gods*. When I set out every day to return to Schweidnitz, he used to say to me :

"Adieu, my dear sir ; sleep peacefully in your bed, while I shall be on my straw. You will see that to-morrow we shall take each other by the ears. If this happens, do not come ; remain at Schweidnitz, and pray there for me and for my troops. I shall not spare myself ; I will show

my officers and my soldiers the road to death or to victory.”

The Russians having decamped from Striegau, to retire into Poland, His Majesty returned to Bunzelwitz,<sup>1</sup> where he remained for some time opposite M. Loudon. When he was informed of Platen's successes, he resolved to proceed in the direction of Neisse, to alarm the Austrian general, to attract him into its neighbourhood, and to return by forced marches the way he came, in order to occupy the camp of Kunzendorf, establishing there a corps of troops and then proceeding to Saxony. His Majesty, in fact, did start from Bunzelwitz, and gave his orders, in setting out, to General Zastrow; proceeded to Gross-Nossen, at one march from Neisse. It was there that he learned, while I was present, that General Loudon had taken the town of Schweidnitz by assault, and this in four hours. This was a thunderbolt for the army, for the end of the campaign and for the future.—“Is this possible, my dear sir! is it possible!”—General Lentulus came and confirmed the sad news. The King did not lose heart; he immediately recalled those of his troops who were already on the way to Neisse, and, after a few days, he set out, in order to occupy the camp of Strehlen, and to see from there whether he could

<sup>1</sup> Whence he sent General Platen to destroy the military stores of the Russians in Poland, and to proceed next to Colberg, in order, acting with Prince Württemberg, to drive away General Rumianzow, who held firm. The successes of the general were at first brilliant; the sequel unfortunately did not come up to these.

remedy his misfortunes, and in order to be within reach of Breslau and to prevent the enemy from spreading any farther.

The adventure at Glatz rendered possible that at Schweidnitz. Although on a disaster everybody made a point of saying as a kind of merit, and always after the event, 'I told you so,' it is certain that nearly all the officers were apprehensive at the departure of the King from his camp of Bunzelwitz. They feared for the town which he was abandoning, they said, so inopportunately, and which he left with raw battalions, which were ill-disposed and made up for the most part of bandits and deserters, and in which the intriguing Catholics hated the Prussians. These reflections of the army were not out of place; but in their calmer moments they recollected that the town was a strong one and the army only three marches away from it. Yet uneasiness bore sway again, and they ventured to blame the King. He had nevertheless taken his precautions. He sent for General Zastrow at Piltzen, and told him to speak frankly: that if he needed troops and feared for the town, he would give him several battalions.—'I fear nothing,' said the commandant; 'and if these people took it into their head to come, they would be thoroughly beaten.'—"But are you sure of your troops?" said the King.—'Yes, Sire!' replied the general; 'I am sure of them!'—This is what he said, to the letter. The Margrave Charles and General Lentulus were witnesses of the King's proposals and of the

Schweidnitz  
taken in the  
year 1761.

commandant's refusal, which satisfied him, but did not quieten the army. How cruelly was the general deceived! He was not informed that the enemy were advancing, notwithstanding the posts which he had stationed in advance and which should have instructed him. He was not on his guard against the ill-intentioned persons of the town; he counted too much on his battalions, which for the most part fought like cowards. Perhaps he did not take every possible precaution as regards the disposition of the cannon and as regards the defence in case of attack; the enemy were in the forts at the moment when they least expected it. M. de Beville, an aide-de-camp of the King, resisted until the morning, and by his defence won the approval of the officers and of the army. The town was taken, and the King consequently saw himself exposed to the greatest disasters, and lost in a moment the fruits of the most brilliant campaign that ever was.

Let me be permitted one more reflection. The plan which the King had formed was to have been a secret, and it was not kept so. Every one at headquarters and in the army knew that the King would make for Neisse, in order to attract the Austrian general thither, and that, when he had fulfilled his aim, he would return on his steps, to proceed to Saxony. It is very probable that the Austrian, who flooded us with spies, learned the plan which had been proposed, and therefore remained quietly on the hills of Kunzendorf, which

he had espoused, and allowed the King to march on, in order to deal him this heavy blow, which it is also said that Loudon had had in mind for a long time. It is very cruel for a prince to see his plans divulged, and to be the victim of people who through inadvertence, thoughtlessness or vanity do not know what they should say or conceal. This knowledge of the King's plan was one of the reasons of the army's fears for the town of Schweidnitz.

His Majesty, on arriving in his camp of Strehlen, took first of all every possible precaution, so that no disaster might happen to him, in order thus to await quietly the fate of Colberg, about which he began to have many anxieties.

“You must acknowledge that I am very unfortunate; I take every possible care, and I am not supported. Who would have suspected the taking of this town! It is unheard of.”

Never were headquarters more weighed with cares and alarms about the future; every one had a long face of despair; every one saw things blackly: ‘We shall not be able to hold out! It would not have been so bad if we had marched on Schweidnitz; perhaps we should have retaken this unhappy town immediately’—arguments which were out of place. The taking of the town was impossible. Abominable roads, an army defending it, ten battalions in the town: what success could have been hoped? Everybody wished for peace; the King almost alone held firm, and kept a good

countenance. During his stay he went out little ; occupied himself with reading and composition, to divert his mind from the disaster which had happened to him and from those which were ready to fall on him. He composed an ode on the death of the Prince of Brunswick, an *Epître sur la méchanceté des hommes, le Stoïcien*, and put into verse all that was best in Marcus Aurelius.

“ You see me,” he said to me one evening, “ with Lucretius and my Stoics. They are good people who sustain you in misfortune.”

I replied that, if you did not find in yourself the wherewithal to bear the reverses of fortune, reading about the Stoics especially would not bring it to you.

“ Oh, I see exactly ; you are not in favour of these people, who are so dismal. But, believe me, they are a great help.”

This conversation furnished him with the idea of an epistle which he addressed to me, and which he sent me on the following day. In addition to these compositions, he read Vertot, d’Alembert’s *Mélanges*, Cicero’s philosophical works, and the history of Diodorus of Sicily. Notwithstanding these readings, which only this Prince could have done in such circumstances, he had many anxieties. The situation in Pomerania was one source of many of them. Yet one week there was some gleam of hope ; and, as if each moment of his life was to be marked by striking incidents, it was just about the time of this gleam of hope that a noble-



man named Warkotsch conceived the plan of carrying off the King and handing him over to the Austrians. As His Majesty had lodged with him, he took this as an excuse to come and pay his court to him, which he did at the giving of the orders of the day. He used to dine with His Majesty's aides-de-camp, and, while doing so, would speak of the King in the highest terms: 'I cannot see this Prince without being touched and without admiring him. What hardships he has undergone, what sorrows he has had! How cruel it was for him to lose such a place as Schweidnitz! My heart shuddered for it; he does not know how much I worship him.'—Each day he would send fruit to His Majesty, who was very fond of it, and almost every day he was present at the giving of the orders of the day, and saw the officers, his friends, and reiterated his zeal for His Majesty, his true attachment for his person, his sense of his misfortunes; and this treacherous, this abominable man made these journeys only to study the neighbourhood of the house occupied by the King, and to make certain of the entry to the King's apartments and of the means of carrying him off in safety. Thus this odious gentleman made a mock of his oaths of loyalty to the King and of the credulity of those who believed in his fine speeches, never thinking that a man could carry ingratitude and treachery to that extent. When this wretch was assured that it would be easy to carry off the King, who in fact was exposed enough and

who took no precautions for his person in his quarters, he informed Colonel Wallis, who commanded the advanced posts of the Austrian army, of his design. The better to carry out this design, he employed an honest Roman ecclesiastic, who thought as Warkotsch did. The nobleman conveyed his letters to the priest by one of his grooms, and the latter passed them on safely to the colonel of the Austrian guards. On the day on which the plot was to be carried into execution, Warkotsch, according to his custom, sent a letter in the early morning to the priest by his groom, saying to the latter : ‘ If you come across any Prussian hussars, throw the letter away ; but if you meet any Austrians, keep it. Go straight to the priest ; bring me back his reply, and give it only to me.’—The groom, surprised at this speech, said to himself on the way : ‘ There is certainly something afoot which is not altogether right. The Prussians have plundered and destroyed my house in Bohemia ; but that doesn’t matter ! I will go and hand the letter to the King of Prussia, for it certainly concerns him.’—He proceeded to the headquarters, and told the officer he wanted to speak to the King. The officer replied that you did not speak to the King in that way.—‘ I must speak to him and hand him a letter.’—‘ You will not hand it to him.’—He insisted so much that he was taken to see M. de Krusemarck, aide-de-camp general. Fortunately he was at his quarters. The groom handed him the letter and informed him of his

suspicious. M. de Krusemarck, who was devotedly attached to the King, brought this man to him. His Majesty opened the letter, and read in it that all would be well, that M. de Wallis was to send 100 Pandours and 100 hussars, and that he had a waggon ready in which to put the King; that he was to proceed at dusk to his residence, and that he would lead him safely at midnight to the King's quarters; that every measure had been so well taken that success was infallible.—“These good people wish to carry me off; they are taking a great deal of trouble.”<sup>1</sup>—He sent a cavalry officer with a detachment of dragoons to seize the rogue, Warkotsch. The officer found him, and Warkotsch said to him, without losing countenance: ‘I don't know why they are making so much fuss; I haven't refused to deliver forage. Wait a moment, captain, I will go and dress myself, and will proceed with you to the headquarters.’—The officer, who unfortunately had not been informed of what was afoot, believed quite simply what the traitor said to him, and the latter took advantage of the moment allowed him to escape to the Austrians. The officer, seeing that he did not return, went to look for him in his room; but found that he had disappeared. He got off with a few weeks' arrest.

While this was happening on the traitor's estate,

<sup>1</sup> “Why did you bring me the letter?” said the King to the groom; “seeing we have done you harm?”—‘Ah, Sire, I felt’—pointing to his stomach—‘something which told me that I was not doing right.’—He was pretty well aware of his master's designs.

the generals took every precaution to assure the safety of headquarters. His Majesty had received this news with so much calmness that he only thought of taking the traitor. In the evening, I was called at five o'clock.

“Do you know, my dear sir,” said the King to me, “the fine scheme which had been formed against me?”

‘No, Sire.’

“Why, they wanted to carry me off this evening.” I was startled.

“Yes, this evening; but they would not have had me, for I should have been killed first.”

‘But, Sire, you do not get yourself killed just as you please!’

“Believe me,” he said, “they would not have taken me alive.”

All headquarters, however, thought the thing very possible. My mind, being filled with this horror, could pay no attention for a whole hour to what His Majesty said to me. I let him know this.

“Reassure yourself, my dear sir; I will read you a tragedy; we will pass our evening in this way.” The tragedy being read, he had brought in some bread and butter; I remained a moment longer.

“Now I am going to bed. I shall sleep peacefully. You do the same, and think no more of the tragi-comic scene. The affair would certainly not have succeeded.”

On leaving, I found sentinels everywhere and all the passages guarded. This reassured me for His Majesty. This story was the subject of every conversation ; nobody spoke of anything but the traitor and of the misfortunes to which we should have been exposed, if the plot had succeeded.

The extreme cold, the lack of provisions induced <sup>1762.</sup> the King to take up his winter quarters. He proceeded to Breslau, where he stayed constantly in his room, going over his misfortunes, brooding over those which threatened, and making arrangements for the next campaign, if it should be possible to enter upon one. He learned the news of Colberg, which did not astonish him ; he had been prepared for it :

“ Every misfortune then has befallen me ! What is going to become of us next year ; what will become of my people ; what will happen to my army ? I see no way of escape open to me ; yet I shall do everything I can : we must conquer or perish. I shall certainly not die like a coward, and if I see that on the 28th February my efforts are useless, I shall have recourse to my Stoics and my box ; but if I see the slightest way of escape, I shall put forth the greatest efforts. It would be base to despair without geometrical reasons.”

This kind of talk distressed me keenly. I tried at first and in vain to distract him from his lugubrious ideas ; but his reverses had been too great, his future reverses were too visible to be driven

from his mind. This violent situation lasted until the moment when the news came that the Empress Elizabeth was at the point of death. In spite of the agitation of a state as violent as that in which the King was, he seized moments in which to compose. He wrote a philosophical epistle on the systems of the philosophers, which he addressed to Sir Andrew Mitchell. He read the treatise on the *City of God*, by St. Augustine, Bayle's *Contrains-les d'entrer*, and he finished the third volume of his *Pensées sur les Comètes*, when he learned that the Empress was dangerously ill. He told me the news in the evening :

“ You will see, my dear sir, that she will not die, and I shall have to struggle against the tempest ; I wager that she will recover.”

‘ And I, Sire, that she will descend in peace to the sepulchre.’

“ Well, then, what will you wager ? ”

‘ A discretion.’

“ Good ; if I lose, I will make you a present, and, if I win, you will give me what you please.”

Every day we spoke of her illness, of her death and of our wager. One day he sent for me earlier than usual. When I arrived, he advanced towards me, making very profound obeisances :

“ There, sir, is my discretion : the Empress is dead, and I make you a present of her epitaph, and so I have settled my lost wager.”

This was getting off rather lightly for an affair of this importance ; but I was too full of pleasing

ideas on the King's fate to say to him, in jest, that his discretion was very slight. We only spoke of the consequence of this death, which had happened so opportunely.

“Who knows what this Prince will do, my dear sir?” he said to me. “I have been fond of him, and I fear he will not repay me! The throne changes a man's ideas very much.”

I say it here without vanity: I sketched out for him the plan which the new Emperor would follow, and this plan was followed to the letter. The King therefore often used to say to me:

“I will always rely on you now; in my greatest misfortunes, you gave me hopes, and these hopes did not prove fallacious. Ah, may all this trouble come to an end, and I be no longer the prey of cares, solitudes and anxieties!”

The King did not seem to me as sensible of this death as he should have been, and the reason for this is a very natural one: his mind, which had only been preoccupied with misfortunes, was still so profoundly affected by disasters that a favourable event could only leave very slight traces on it. I did not begin to perceive that he keenly felt the change in his situation until he said to me:

“Did you not think that I received this important news rather coolly?”

He set himself with greater ardour to his military and civil affairs and to study. He had already made the greatest efforts to gather together his military stores and to complete his troops,

Arrival of  
Gudovich.

when M. Gudovich, a favourite of Peter III., arrived at Breslau. He had been expected for a month past; every moment had been counted, and as he delayed so much in coming, the officers, the town and the troops augured ill of it. He arrived; he brought calm to anxious hearts and opened the eyes of the incredulous. Nobody doubted any longer, when they saw him, that he had indeed arrived.

(21st February.)

The favourite was presented to the King, who had a long interview with him in his room. When he came away, everybody wanted to speak to M. Gudovich. One read in his eyes that all would be well; another that this was not so sure; a third that he saw there the same animosity against the King as Elizabeth had had. For my part, I saw and read in the demeanour of the Russian a great deal of good-nature, a great deal of embarrassment in playing his part, and a great desire to pass for an important personage.—A fourth, who perhaps did not know how to read the physiognomy of a man, asked him: ‘Well, sir, do you bring us good news?’—The favourite, on hearing this indiscreet question, frowned, and said in a very grave voice: ‘Sir, if the Emperor, my master, declares himself for His Majesty, I wish that it may be so; if he does not declare himself, he doubtless knows what he is about.’—At this sentence, pronounced as an oracle, everybody was silent, and every one went to his own quarters to form there his own conjectures. How pleasant it



seemed to several officers to be able to pass a few moments with M. Gudovich, to lead him to the King, and to reconduct him to his own apartments. It seemed to them that the splendour of the favourite's functions was reflected on them. I was amused at all these trifles, and I forgave them to youth and misplaced vanity because of the intentions of the excellent emperor of Russia.

His Majesty seemed to me altogether untroubled and satisfied with what Colonel Gudovich had said to him. He dismissed him overwhelmed with magnificent presents, and prepared to begin his campaign early. But while the King relied on the good intentions of Peter III., the English, led by their minister, Bute, did everything to destroy him in the mind of the Emperor. This worthy Prince gave the King an exact account of what the English, his friends, were plotting against him. His Majesty was as indignant on account of these underhand and perfidious manœuvres as he was touched by the generous conduct of the Emperor. He wrote to him a most affectionate and friendly letter. Peter III. replied in the same tone. These two letters sealed a reciprocal friendship. The King sent the young Count Schwerin to St. Petersburg with the first draft of the treaty of peace and of the arrangement whereby the Russian troops entered the service of the King. The count returned with the treaty signed, and brought the news that General Tschernyschew

would march, first of all, with as many troops as the King should require. He desired only 12,000 men and 1000 Cossacks.

The King, peacefully staying at Bettlern, devoted himself to reading and to composing his mind, which had been agitated by so many shocks. He read there a part of the French poets and several volumes of Fleury's *Histoire ecclésiastique*. In one of these moments of good humour, he asked me whether I had not sent any verses to my lady. I said no.

“Verses are, however, the language of love. But if she were to ask you for some, would you send her any?”

‘Yes, doubtless.’

“Well, then, suppose that she wants some; write them, show them to me, and I will correct them.”

On the following day, I brought my epistle and showed it to him. He corrected several faulty places, and added several lines.—“Send them to your lady; she will be pleased.” Several days afterwards, he composed this pretty piece<sup>1</sup> for me, in which he gave us the rules by which we should govern our future household.

When Marshal Daun encamped on the Zobtenberg with all his army, His Majesty made all his arrangements, so as to have nothing to fear, even while in billets.

“I do not wish,” he said, “to do the marshal

<sup>1</sup> [Not given in the German edition.]

the honour of camping opposite him. I am certain that no harm will come to me; for I have taken good measures, and I shall even disturb him."

In fact, he proposed often to alarm the Austrian cavalry, and to inspire it with uneasiness for all the remainder of the campaign. The Bosniacs and the hussars and the other light troops, who were stationed in advance of the headquarters, came to blows every day with the enemy, and every day they made captures. They were already beginning to be frightened, and the Cossacks were to finish the affair and inspire them with a holy terror. They advanced rapidly towards the banks of the Oder; the infantry, two marches behind them, speeded on. At last these Cossacks arrived at Auras, to the great joy of all the army: 'They will lead the Austrians a dance,' they said, 'and these people will learn at their own expense what it means to have to do with barbarians.'

These barbarians, so yielding towards their friends, whom they no longer distinguish when they suspect that it will be impossible to recognise them and they can massacre with impunity, these barbarians encamped behind Auras in the greatest possible order. None of them dared to escape or to go beyond the bounds which had been set up for them. They took pleasure in showing the arms which they had taken in Berlin and in measuring themselves with the Austrians, who, however, they said, used to give them more forage than they received from us. These people show

an astonishing humility and gentleness; to see them in their camps, you would never suspect their  
(25th June.) barbarity. The day after their arrival, they crossed the Oder. As in a tumult they did not distinguish between friend and foe, and pillaged and killed, in order to rob, everybody who came before them, to all the cavalry, to the generals, to the principal officers, to the aides-de-camp were given a kind of plume which was carried in the hat. Even the King and the Prince wore them. The Cossacks were warned to have a regard for the white plumes. They were taken to the advanced posts. Despite their fatigue, they wanted to attack the Austrian pickets immediately; they put them to flight. Every day they skirmished; several bold strokes which they carried out intimidated the enemy cavalry; it no longer dared to show itself except in great number. While they were imposing so much respect on these same Austrians whose friends they had been, M. de Tschernyschew arrived at the Oder with twelve battalions. He had a day's rest, crossed the Oder,  
(30th June.) and set up his camp at Lissa. His Majesty proceeded there with his suite to see these Russian troops, who had formerly caused him so many anxieties, and to entertain the commanding general and the other generals. On his arrival, he learned from Count de Dohna, whom Prince Ferdinand had despatched to him, that he had carried off a considerable victory against the French.—“ You see,” said His Majesty to General Tschernyschew,

“you bring victory with you.”—The general was flattered with this beginning, and, from admiring the hero, he began to like him. Everybody was aware that M. de Tschernyschew was incensed with this Prince. The reason given for this hatred was the reply he sent to him, at the battle of Zorndorf, when he treated him as an incendiary.

The Russians deserved this title: they had burned Küstrin, without any reason; but the great should always be mindful of a private person. A word which is a trifle coming from an equal, coming from a King is a piercing shaft which nearly always makes itself felt; and a king, however lofty he may be, should irritate no one.

After having gone through the lines, His Majesty went to Lissa with the general-in-chief and the principal officers of the Russian army. He showed to all of them so much kindness, he treated them with so much politeness, and said to them such obliging things that they were moved. Touched because they had been the enemies of a Prince who deserved so much affection, ‘We will prove to him,’ they said, ‘how much we are devoted to him.’—They desired, in fact, to have an occasion to signalise themselves and to prove to the King how real their sentiments were.

“They are fine troops,” the King said to me on his return; “but they are not yet well trained. I shall not do as the Austrians did; I shall not sacrifice them. My troops will be the first exposed, and, if they meet with disaster, the Russians will

be there to support them. Why should I expose these troops inopportunately, and thus abuse their goodwill and that of my friend, the Emperor ?

“As my marches will be very difficult, go and rest at Breslau, and there await events. If I beat the marshal, or if I drive him off from Schweidnitz, I will send for you as soon as we begin the siege of that place. But there will be no battle ; the marshal will perch himself on Ossa.”

After a day's rest, His Majesty marched with them in the direction of Schweidnitz. M. Daun, who would not have kept in his camp at Zobten if the King had marched on him alone, decamped very quickly when he learned that he was coming to him with the Russians. He retired behind Schweidnitz. His Majesty resolved to drive him away from this town. He made an attack on one of their posts, which M. Brentano defended. General Wied, who commanded the attack, was repulsed. His Majesty, who did not wish to sacrifice any more men, withdrew him, and looked about for other means to force the Austrians to abandon the mountains which they occupied. He sent this same General Wied in the direction of Bohemia ; and he had some success at the expense of General Brentano, who had hastened to save the military stores ; he established himself at Braunau, and let loose the Cossacks, who ravaged the region of Königgrätz ; some of them even pushed as far as the gates of Prague. The excesses which they committed were horrible ; they did not, however,

approach those which the unfortunate inhabitants of Pomerania suffered.

The Austrians made an outcry about barbarities ; yet they had no right to complain, and they did not complain when these Cossacks burned and devastated the King's countries. Are not the horrors which march in the train of war great enough without bringing in people who make it a pleasure, a study and a law to leave behind them the traces of destruction, murder, rape and arson !





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